

VIA MEDIA ALIA:
**RECONSIDERING THE CONTROVERSIAL DOCTRINE
OF UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION IN THE THEOLOGY
OF JAMES FRASER OF BREA (1639-1699)**

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I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and is the result of my own independent research. It has not, in any form, been submitted or accepted for any other degree or professional qualification, as specified in the regulations of the University of Edinburgh. All quotations in this thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks, and all sources of outside information have received proper acknowledgment.

Hunter M. Bailey

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ABSTRACT

James Fraser of Brea's significance in Scottish theological history stems principally from his controversial doctrine of universal redemption which led to schisms within the Associate Synod and the Reformed Presbytery in the mid-18th century. During those disputes, several assumptions were made concerning his doctrines that have endured, thereby hindering the development of a more objective interpretation of Fraser's thought. Recent scholarship has begun the re-evaluation of his place in the development of Scottish theology and this thesis continues the process by seeking to exonerate Fraser from the unwarranted and reductionist accusations that have hitherto obscured his doctrine of redemption.

This thesis advances a new and more accurate interpretation of Fraser's doctrine of Christ's redemption. By broadening discussions beyond the single criterion of the scope of Christ's redemption, it also helps develop a more precise understanding of the fundamental issues of the orthodox Reformed position upon redemption during the 17th century. In order to provide a context for scrutinizing Fraser's formulations, the debates surrounding the doctrine of redemption throughout the 16th and 17th centuries have been explored. In addition, a systematic evaluation of Fraser's views on assurance, God's eternal decrees, federal theology and justifying faith has been undertaken to construct a framework through which a more accurate interpretation of his doctrine of universal redemption has been achieved.

Divided into three sections, this thesis begins with two contextualizing chapters. These establish the parameters of this thesis as well as detail several key developments in the doctrine of redemption throughout the 16th and 17th centuries related to determining the proper interpretation of Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption. Following this introductory section, the second section of this thesis, which constitutes the main body in four chapters, scrutinizes Fraser's doctrine of redemption in relation to his expressed purpose in writing and his fundamental doctrinal commitments, namely his unwavering fidelity to covenantal absolutism and redemptive particularism. The final section of this thesis is the conclusion, wherein scholars are encouraged to reconsider how they classify the doctrine of redemption and, specifically, how they understand Fraser's doctrine of redemption in relation to the redemptive theories of his contemporaries.

It is commonly recognized that Fraser deviated from the Reformed orthodox norms of the 17th century by arguing for a broader scope of Christ's redemption, one that included the reprobate as well as the elect. This thesis moves beyond this basic understanding of his theology in two ways. Firstly, it explores why Fraser determined it was necessary to depart from the traditional presentation of Christ's redemption and secondly it identifies how his adoption of the two-fold design of redemption corresponded to the more foundational theological commitments of his Reformed contemporaries. Since most previous interpretations have run together the three different positions, Fraser's perspective has been carefully compared and contrasted with the redemptive paradigms proposed by the Arminians and the Hypothetical Universalists. This thesis will challenge such a confusion of theologies, arguing instead that Fraser's doctrine of redemption truly represents *via media alia*.

In order to fill the gaps left by earlier examinations of Fraser's theology which concentrated upon his *Treatise on Justifying Faith*, for the first time equal

consideration has been given to all of Fraser's writings. Even the voluminous doctoral study by Duncan Fraser (1944), proving that Fraser of Brea employed the theme of Christ's universal redemption throughout his writings, failed to provide an adequate analysis of how Fraser's doctrine of redemption fitted into his own theological system or into the context of the Reformed community of 17th century Europe. This thesis provides just such an analysis.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Act</i>	Gib, A. <i>Act of the Associate Synod, 1755</i>
<i>AF</i>	Beeke, J. R. <i>Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation</i>
<i>AJ</i>	Baxter, <i>Aphorismes of Justification</i>
<i>Assurance</i>	Bell, M. C. <i>Calvin and Scottish Theology, The Doctrine of Assurance</i>
<i>Atonement</i>	Clifford, A. C. <i>Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology 1640-1790--An Evaluation</i>
<i>BTP</i>	Amyraut, M. <i>Brief Treatise on Predestination and Its Dependent Principles</i>
<i>CAH</i>	Armstrong, B. <i>Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France</i>
<i>Case</i>	Mair, T. <i>The Case Laid Open: or an Essay, to Satisfy Those Who Desire Information Anent the Strange Breach Between the Associate Synod and Mr. Mair</i>
<i>CC</i>	Durham, J. <i>Christ Crucified: or, The Marrow of the Gospel</i>
<i>CEC</i>	Kendall, R. T. <i>Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649</i>
<i>DD</i>	Owen, J. <i>Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu: Or The Death of Death in the Death of Christ</i>
<i>DDC</i>	Davenant, J. <i>A Dissertation on the Death of Christ</i>
<i>Decree</i>	Muller, R. A. <i>Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology From Calvin to Perkins</i>
<i>DSCH&T</i>	Cameron, N. M. deS. <i>Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology</i>
<i>Dying</i>	Rutherford, S. <i>Christ Dying, and Drawing Sinners to Himself Or, A Survey of Our Saviour in His Soul-Suffering, His Loveliness in His Death, and the Efficacy Thereof</i>
<i>GCP</i>	Muller, R. A. <i>God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius: Sources and Directions of Scholastic Protestantism in the Era of Early Orthodoxy</i>
<i>Institutes</i>	Calvin, J. <i>Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion</i>
<i>JF</i>	Fraser, J. <i>A Treatise on Justifying Faith</i>
<i>JFB</i>	Fraser, D. "James Fraser of Brea 1639-1699: His Life and Writings,

	With Special Reference to His Theory of Universal Redemption, and Its Influence on Religious Thought in Scotland"
<i>JFSF</i>	Fraser, J. <i>A Treatise Concerning Justifying or Saving Faith</i>
<i>Laird</i>	Whyte, A. <i>James Fraser, Laird of Brea</i>
<i>MA</i>	Nicole, R. "Moyse Amyraut (1596-1644) and the Controversy on Universal Grace, First Phase (1634-1637)"
<i>Marrow</i>	Lachman, D. C. <i>The Marrow Controversy 1718-1723: An Historical and Theological Analysis</i>
<i>MC</i>	McLeod Campbell, J. <i>The Nature of the Atonement</i>
<i>Meditations</i>	Fraser, J. <i>Meditations on Several Subjects in Divinity</i>
<i>Memoirs</i>	Fraser, J. <i>Memoirs of the Rev. James Fraser, of Brea</i>
<i>ODC</i>	Owen, J. <i>Of the Death of Christ</i>
<i>OJ</i>	Baxter, R. <i>Of Justification</i>
<i>Proceedings</i>	Associate Synod. <i>The Proceedings of the Associate Synod, at Edinburgh, in March and August, 1755</i>
<i>PRRD</i>	Muller, R. A. <i>Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, Ca. 1520 to Ca. 1725</i>
<i>Reforming</i>	Van Dixhoorn, C. B. "Reforming the Reformation: Theological Debate at the Westminster Assembly 1643-1652"
<i>RR</i>	Packer, J. I. <i>The Redemption & Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter: A Study in Puritan Theology</i>
<i>SCSM</i>	Fraser, J. <i>Some Choice, Select Meditations</i>
<i>ST</i>	Torrance, T. F. <i>Scottish Theology From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell</i>
<i>TIC</i>	Godfrey, W. R. "Tensions Within International Calvinism: The Debate on the Atonement at the Synod of Dort, 1618-1619"
<i>TJR</i>	Baxter, R. <i>A Treatise of Justifying Righteousness</i>
<i>URC</i>	Durham, J. <i>The Unsearchable Riches of Christ, and of Grace and Glory in and Through Him</i>
<i>URM</i>	Baxter, R. <i>Universal Redemption of Mankind, by the Lord Jesus Christ</i>
<i>WA</i>	Arminius, <i>The Works of James Arminius</i>
<i>WCF</i>	<i>The Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisme</i>

CHAPTER I: AN INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This thesis reassesses James Fraser of Brea's doctrine of redemption.¹ It was no stranger to scrutiny and controversy, both historically and in modern theology. Penned during the turbulent theological climate of the 17th century Covenanted movement, his views on redemption achieved their greatest significance half a century after Fraser's death, when they were published in 1749 and led to the schisms of the Associate Synod and the Reformed Presbytery during the 18th century.² Fraser's doctrine of redemption has re-emerged in modern scholarship

¹ Fraser's doctrine of redemption is most explicitly described in the appendix of *A Treatise on Justifying Faith*; however, evidence from his other works reveals that Fraser's views on the two-fold nature of Christ's redemption were not restricted to this appendix. Fraser, J., *A Treatise Concerning Justifying or Saving Faith* (Edinburgh: John Mosman, 1722), 6, 80-81, 151, 165; Fraser, J., *Meditations on Several Subjects in Divinity* (Edinburgh: 1721), 163, wherein Fraser represented Christ's blood as a "city of refuge," a common illustration tied to his arguments for the universality of Christ's redemption; Fraser, J., *Some Choice, Select Meditations* (Edinburgh: 1726), 8, 19, and 33, where it was maintained that Christ established a universal covenant with respect to his being a "publick Person." Duncan Fraser, who has written the only other doctoral thesis on James Fraser of Brea in 1944, meticulously documented the evidence of the doctrine of universal redemption throughout Fraser's works and concludes, "his particular theory of universal redemption, as we have seen, does appear more or less clearly in practically all his books." See, Fraser, D., "James Fraser of Brea 1639-1699: His Life and Writings, with special reference to his Theory of Universal Redemption, and its Influence on Religious Thought in Scotland" (Ph.D., University of Edinburgh, 1944), 456. See also, McGlynn, T. J., "The Life and Theology of the Reverend James Fraser of Brea, 1639-1699" (M.Phil., University of Wales at Lampeter, 2002).

² "In 1749 there was published in Edinburgh a book that was destined to have a considerable influence upon the course of Scottish religious history during the succeeding half century...In 1753 the standing of the book was brought specially before the Reformed Presbytery and in the following year before the Associate Synod. The Synod considered its teaching so dangerous that to guard their faithful people against being misled by it, they formally repudiated the book, and in a series of propositions set forth the orthodox doctrine." See, Couper, W. J., "A Breach in the Reformed Presbytery, 1753," *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 1 (1926): 1-2. See also, Associate Synod, *Act of the Associate Synod at Edinburgh, April 18 1754: Containing an Assertion of Some Gospel-Truths, in Opposition to Arminian Errors, Upon the Head of Universal Redemption*. (Edinburgh: W. Sands, 1754), 3-12; Associate Synod, *The Proceedings of the Associate Synod, at Edinburgh, in March and August, 1755* (Edinburgh: Sands, Murray, and Cochran, 1755), iii-iv.

through the work of the M. C. Bell and T.F. Torrance, who use Fraser's doctrine of redemption to show Calvinism in the 17th century was not a homogeneous group and to support their claims that during the late Westminsterian period there began to be a shift back towards a more biblical form of Calvinism. Though Fraser is a relatively minor figure in the history of the Church and in the history of Reformed theology, his theory on redemption provides a valuable and relatively rare insight into the theological disputes that developed in the late Westminsterian period.

To establish a proper interpretation of Fraser's doctrine of redemption, it will be necessary to move beyond the widely accepted understanding of Fraser's thought and discover (1) why he departed from the traditional particularist's presentation of Christ's redemption, (2) how his commitment to the double design of redemption corresponded to his other soteriological commitments and (3) how his loyalty to the concept of universality related to the fundamentals of Reformed orthodoxy. An objective evaluation of Fraser's contribution to Scottish theology can only be made in the light of his motivation for departing from Reformed norms in the area of redemption and his desire to remain within orthodoxy in other aspects of his theology.

It will be demonstrated and argued that Fraser's particular *via media* is unique among the theologians discussed in this thesis. Much of the scholarship scrutinizing Fraser's place in Scottish theological history has failed to recognize the uniqueness of his perspective on Christ's redemption, stereotyping him as simply a new incarnation of Arminianism or hypothetical universalism. This thesis, unlike most previous scholarship, exonerates Fraser from these unwarranted charges through a detail examination of those elements of his theology governing his doctrine of redemption. Such a comprehensive investigation of the theology which controlled his theory on Christ's redemption has never been undertaken.

This analysis of Fraser's theological arguments clarifies the nature of the controversy regarding Christ's redemption, which began during the late Westminsterian period and dominated discussions in the Reformed churches in Scotland throughout much of the 18th century. Furthermore, this thesis supplies valuable insight into how orthodox theologians began to think through their responses to the changing theological climate and how modern scholars should interpret the evolution of the doctrine of redemption in Reformed orthodoxy during this era. It will be argued that Fraser largely overestimated the ability of his doctrine

of redemption to answer the specific questions he set out to resolve. However, these shortcomings do not undermine the importance of Fraser's role in Scottish theological history, nor do they detract from the contribution of his thesis to ecclesiastical history and theological scholarship. This thesis is less concerned with Fraser's conclusions than with the process through which he arrived at his conclusions and theological convictions which governed his arguments.

1.2: Controversy Concerning the Doctrine of Redemption

In 1749, the posthumous publication of the second portion of Fraser's *A Treatise on Justifying Faith*, to which an appendix delineating his views on the nature and extent of Christ's redemption was attached, was met with an instant response by critics. The immediacy of the response to Fraser's views not only reflected its controversial content, but also the heightened sensitivity surrounding the doctrine of redemption during the Reformation and Post-Reformation eras. Given the doctrine's significance, covering the purpose and the benefits of Christ's death, debates were not surprising. With such high stakes, Reformed theologians had become determined to define meticulously each element of Christ's redemption.

Throughout this thesis the term 'redemption' will be employed when speaking of Christ's efforts to save sinners. Redemption has been chosen over the term 'atonement,' primarily because it was the term Fraser felt best conveyed the fact Christ's work preceded and extended the act of atoning. Redemption included those aspects of Christ's work related to atonement, but also incorporated the eternal decrees, the new covenant, the incarnation, resurrection and intercession of Christ on behalf of his people. Therefore, redemption was better suited to describe the totality of Christ's work as Fraser understood its impact on the lives of the elect and the reprobate.

The controversies concerning the doctrine of redemption which have plagued the Reformed church largely began during the Synod of Dort, when debates concerning the nature and extent of Christ's redemption were brought to the forefront.³ The Remonstrants, who defended Arminius' teaching on Christ's redemption, challenged the accepted Reformed view that the scope of Christ's efforts to redeem was limited to the elect. The limited extent of Christ's redemption was

³ The delegates of Dort defended what they considered to be the faithful Calvinistic interpretation of Christ's redemption, which was described in terms of a 'limited' scope.

governed by the efficacy of his purpose actually to save the elect. Theodore Beza popularized the doctrine of limited redemption, but traced the doctrine back to his predecessor, John Calvin. Many modern scholars question Beza's representation of Calvin's theology.⁴ In contrast to Beza's Calvinism, the Remonstrants argued Christ's redemption was universal in scope and in efficacy; Christ's redemption did not secure salvation for any, but Christ provided the possibility of salvation for those willing to be saved.⁵ Despite a variety of opinions on the extent of Christ's redemption by the Dort delegates, the synod reached a consensus on the divine purpose and efficacy of Christ's redemption to secure the salvation of God's elect. The unanimity projected by Dort's conclusions against Arminian interpretations, however, did not long stem the tide of controversy, and disagreements over the doctrine of redemption continued to plague the Reformed church.⁶

⁴ B. Hall, *John Calvin* (Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology) (Appleford, UK: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1966), 25; Bray, J. S., *Theodore Beza's Doctrine of Predestination* (Nieuwkoop: 1975), 140; Kendall, R. T., *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 32-34. Alternatively, L.C. Boughton maintains, "By 1555, when Beza informed Calvin of his supralapsarian understanding of decrees in his *'tabula predestinationis'*" his mentor expressed no objections." Boughton, L. C., "Supralapsarianism and the Role of Metaphysics in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Theology," *WTJ* 48 (1986): 80. For other examples of those recognizing the continuity between Calvin and Beza, see, Nicole, R., "John Calvin's View on the Extent of the Atonement," *WTJ* 47 (1985): 197-225; Godfrey, W. R., "Tensions within International Calvinism: The Debate on the Atonement at the Synod of Dort, 1618-1619" (Ph.D., Stanford University, 1974), 79-89; Muller, R. A., *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology From Calvin to Perkins* 2, D.C. Steinmetz. Studies in Historical Theology (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1986), 79-84; Muller, R. A., "Calvin and the Calvinists: Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities Between the Reformation and Orthodoxy (Part 1)," *CTJ* 30 (1995): 1349; Muller, R. A., "Calvin and the Calvinists: Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities Between the Reformation and Orthodoxy (Part 2)," *CTJ* 31 (1996): 153-154; Muller, R. A., "The Myth of 'Decretal Theology'," *CTJ* 30 (1995): 160-163; Rainbow, J. H., *The Will of God and the Cross: An Historical and Theological Study of John Calvin's Doctrine of Limited Redemption* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1990), 2.

⁵ Muller explains Arminius adopted the perspective of Driedo and Molina when arguing that God sent Christ with the determination to save the entire human race and provide the means necessary to that end. See, Muller, R. A., *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius: Sources and Directions of Scholastic Protestantism in the Era of Early Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 163. Arminius, therefore, speaks of Christ's redemption in terms of creating a possibility for salvation, but securing salvation for no one. See, Arminius, J., *The Works of Arminius* Trans. by J. Nichols and W. Nichols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), 1406.

⁶ The Synod of Dort presented a unified front against the general reference theory of Christ's redemption proposed by the Remonstrants. However, the consensus at Dort did not imply agreement over Christ's redemption nor over its extent. John Davenant was one of the moderates present at Dort, who affirmed the absolute nature of God's decrees and the efficacy of Christ's redemption to save the elect, but he broadened the scope of Christ's redemption to include the reprobate. Godfrey, *TIC*, 179-185. See also, Section 3.1 of this thesis.

Further deliberations over the doctrine of redemption were provoked by Moise Amyraut's doctrine of hypothetical universal redemption.⁷ Although Amyraut popularized the doctrine of hypothetical universalism, many trace the roots of this *via media* to the Scottish theologian John Cameron. Amyraut claimed faithful adherence to the Canons of Dort, while asserting the doctrine of hypothetical universalism accurately represented Calvin's teachings on Christ's redemption.⁸ His theological opponents, especially Peter Du Moulin, fought to convict Amyraut of heresy. Despite Amyraut avoiding condemnation by three Synods, many completely rejected Amyraut's doctrine of hypothetical universalism based on his notion that God's decrees were conditional.⁹ Their objections did not prevent the spread of Amyraut's

⁷ See, Cameron, J., *Ioannis Cameronis ... Ta Sozomena, Sive Opera Partim Ab Auctore Ipso Edita, Partim Post Eius Obiitum Vulgata, Partim Nusquam Hactenus Publicata, Vel E? Gallico Idiomate Nunc Primum in Latinum Linguam Translata. In Unum Collecta, Et Variis Indicibus Instructa.* (Francofurti: In officina Clementis Schleichij haeredum, & Ioannis Pressij bibliopolarum, 1642), 529. Cameron justifies the inclusion of God's conditional decree, one of the hallmarks of hypothetical universalism. F.P. Van Stem refers to Cameron as "the spiritual father" of Amyraut's thought. See, Van Stam, F. P., *Over the Theology of Saumur, 1635-1650: Disrupting Debates Among the Huguenots in Complicated Circumstances* (Amsterdam: APA-Holland University Press, 1988), 29. See also, Maury, G. B., "John Cameron: A Scottish Protestant Theologian in France (1575-1625)," *The Scottish Historical Review* 7 (1910): 344; Jinkins, M., "Atonement and the Character of God: A Comparative Study in the Theology of Atonement in Jonathan Edwards and John McLeod Campbell" (Ph.D., University of Aberdeen, 1990), A14; Proctor, L., "The Theology of Moise Amyraut Considered as a Reaction Against Seventeenth-Century Calvinism" (Ph.D., University of Leeds, 1952), 97. Proctor acknowledges that Amyraut's teaching was "a substantial modification of Reformed Scholasticism" and considered by many to be "irreconcilable with the seventeenth century doctrine of predestination." See, 294 and 295; Strehle, S., "Universal Grace and Amyraldianism," *WTJ* 51 (1989): 346. See, Thomas, G. M., "The Extent of the Atonement: A Dilemma for Reformed Theology from Calvin to the Consensus (1536-1675)" (Ph.D., Brunel University, 1994), 269, 272, 281, 288, and 312-315, who not only specifically links Amyraut and the other theologians of Saumur with Cameron but Baxter as well. Alternatively, see, Swinne, A. H., *John Cameron: Philosoph Und Theologe (1579-1625)* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1968), 263, who questions the consistency with which Amyraut taught Cameron's doctrine of redemption.

⁸ Armstrong, B., *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France* (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 221. M. Jinkins explains that John Cameron developed a view of the covenant as a "*foedus hypotheticum*," which was defined as "'gracious promise of God...yet with the requirement of our duty subjoined.'" It was this Baxter's *foedus hypotheticum* which Fraser so vehemently opposed. See, Jinkins, M., *A Comparative Study in the Theology of Atonement in Jonathan Edwards and John McLeod Campbell: Atonement and the Character of God* (San Francisco, CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1993), Appendix 14.

⁹ In 1637, the Synod of Alençon cleared Amyraut and Testard of heresy charges. Armstrong suggests the synod tended to agree with Amyraut regarding the extent of Christ's redemption. See, Armstrong, *CAH*, 91. Likewise, in 1644-45 and 1659, Amyraut was also cleared at the Synod of Charenton and the Synod of Loudin. Peter Du Moulin and Andre Rivet were Amyraut's chief accusers. See, Du Moulin, P., *The Anatomy of Arminianisme: or The Opening of the Controuersies Lately Handled in the Low-Countryes, Concerning the Doctrine of Providence, of Predestination, of the Death of Christ, of Nature and Grace.* (London: T.S., 1620) and Rivet, G., *Vindiciae Evangelicae De Iustificatione & Annexis Ei Capitibus, Quibus Praeter Pontificorum Errores Philippi Codvrci Sophismata, Ioh.*

influence within the Reformed church. In Britain, for example, the doctrine of hypothetical universalism can be recognized in the conditional nature of Christ's redemption taught by Richard Baxter.¹⁰

Persistent unrest over the doctrine of Christ's redemption was one factor causing the English Parliament to commission an assembly to meet at Westminster to revise the doctrinal standards of the Reformed churches in Britain.¹¹ On the 12th of June, 1643, the Westminster Assembly convened and over the course of the next six years every doctrine of Reformed orthodoxy was scrupulously re-examined.¹² Concerning the doctrine of redemption, the Westminster divines declared it was limited in scope and efficacious to secure the salvation of the elect.¹³ Some present at

Cameronis & Mosis Amyraldi Placita Varia Examinantur (Amstelædami: 1648). Du Moulin battled against Arminianism and determined that the theory of Christ's redemption propagated by Amyraut was Arminian at the core; Rivet agreed. See, Du Moulin, P., *De Mosis Amyraldi Libro* (1649). Amyraut and the other advocates of hypothetical universalism were absolved of heresy charges at National Synod of Alençon 1637 and National Synod of Charenton 1645. See, Strehle, S., "Universal Grace and Amyraldianism," 345; Platt, J., *Reformed Thought and Scholasticism: The Arguments for the Existence of God in Dutch Theology, 1575-1650* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1982), 168 and 188; Tait, L. G., "Pierre Du Moulin (1568-1658), Huguenot Theologian" (Ph.D., University of Edinburgh, 1955), 164. Amyraut's acquittal, however, did not stop the framers of the Helvetic Formula Consensus (1675) from dedicating articles four to nine and thirteen to twenty-two to attacking Amyraut's theory. See, Klauber, M. I., "The Helvetic Formula Consensus (1675): An Introduction and Translation," *Trinity Journal* 11 (1990): 107.

¹⁰ Regarding Baxter's association with Amyraldianism, see, Baxter, R., *Certain Disputations of Right to Sacraments, and the True Nature of Visible Christianity* (London: William Du-Gard, 1657), B2 and Keeble, N. H. and G. F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* Vols. 1 and 2, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), I.53, 101; II.118. Baxter explicitly states agreement with Amyraut and Cameron, but also claims Davenant for support of his views on Christ's redemption. See also, Section 3.4 of this thesis.

¹¹ See, Mitchell, A. F., *The Westminster Assembly: Its History and Standards* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1883), 179-180.

¹² See, Van Dixhoorn, C. B., "Reforming the Reformation: Theological Debate at the Westminster Assembly 1643-1652" (Ph.D., University of Cambridge, 2004), 37-39, 348 and 352, wherein Van Dixhoorn persuasively argues the Westminster Assembly was called not merely to reform the ecclesiology of the church, but also comprehensively re-evaluate the theological standards of Reformed orthodoxy.

¹³ Those who oppose the Assembly's conclusions regarding the nature and extent of Christ's redemption are quick to highlight that the Westminster Assembly was not a homogeneous group. Kendall points to men like Arrowsmith, Calamy, Seaman, and Vines as examples of those who fought for a more "Amyraldian-friendly" version of Christ's redemption based on their arguments for the universal extent of Christ's redemption. See, *CEC*, 208. See also, Hillin, W. D., "Richard Vines (1600?-1656): A Moderate Divine in the Westminster Assembly" (Ph.D., University of Iowa, 1968), 12-13, 188, and 190; Mitchell, A. F. and J. Struthers, *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines While Engaged in Preparing Their Directory for Church Government, Confession of Faith, and Catechisms* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874), lvi-ix, 152-156 and *Reforming*, 202-211. Van Dixhoorn makes no judgment as to whether or not these theologians were sympathetic to hypothetical universalism but the debates which took place concerning the doctrine of justification provide some evidence for these claims. See, *Reforming*, 294.

Westminster maintained the biblical doctrine of Christ's redemption should incorporate all humanity. Advocates of this broader interpretation of Christ's redemption, like Calamy, Seaman, and Vines, compromised with the Westminsterian particularists. With both parties affirming that Christ's redemption for the elect was absolute, by which they meant Christ secured in his redemption salvation and everything necessary for salvation to be applied to an elect individual, the divines agreed to remain silent on the question of whether there were general benefits of Christ's redemption which flowed to all. Westminster's pronouncements did not end debate as to whether particularism was the only acceptable stance in Reformed orthodoxy.¹⁴

Particularists, a term employed throughout this thesis, affirmed that Christ's redemption was not merely the means of securing the possibility of salvation, but the means through which salvation and all the conditions necessary for receiving it were secured for God's elect. Fraser held a particularist view of Christ's redemption, yet broadened the purpose and efficacy of redemption to incorporate the reprobate as well as the elect. It is the contention of this thesis that the failure to recognize the purposeful and particularist nature of Fraser's doctrine of redemption has led to numerous misinterpretations throughout the centuries of controversy over Fraser's unique perspective.

James Fraser of Brea was born and later ministered within this theological climate of conflicting understandings as to the nature and extent of Christ's redemption. As a theologian and a pastor, Fraser attempted to build a bridge between the strict Westminsterian interpretations based on the limitation and particularized nature of Christ's redemption and the more moderate Calvinist perspective which

Warfield, however, concluded that Calamy adopted neither an Arminian or an Amyraldian theory of Christ's redemption, arguing that Calamy taught an absolute, though double, intention in sending Christ to redeem the world. See, Warfield, B. B., *The Making of the Westminster Confession, and Especially of Its Chapter on the Decree of God* (Philadelphia, PA: MacCalla & Company, 1901), 273-277. Warfield clarified that hypothetical universalism fundamentally disagreed with the Westminsterian understanding of the *ordo decretorum*, arguing that Christ's redemption established a conditional plan to save, not an absolute one. See, Warfield, B. B., *The Plan of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1935), 25.

¹⁴ Van Dixhoorn comments, "One of the most striking features of this study is the difficulty which it throws up regarding the definition of post-Reformation Reformed orthodoxy itself." Van Dixhoorn acknowledges his amazement at the diversity of opinions held by the divines at the Assembly and calls for continued dialogue among theologians and historians in order to develop a better understanding of the fundamentals which united the divines. See, *Reforming*, 352 and 354.

integrated all sinners under the canopy of Christ's redemptive efforts. As a result, he created a *via media alia* for understanding Christ's redemption. By entitling Fraser's theory of redemption the *via media alia*, it is differentiated from the middle way popularized by Amyraut and adopted by Baxter. It will be argued that though Fraser recognized some agreement with Amyraut and Baxter with respect to the scope of Christ's redemption, his understanding of God's purpose and the design of Christ's redemption was fundamentally at odds with hypothetical universalism's middle way.

1.3: Methodology

This study focuses upon an examination of Fraser's *via media alia*. It will determine his motivation for developing 'another middle way' and the correlation between his *via media alia* of Christ's redemption and the other elements within his theological framework. This will allow an evaluation of the relationship between Fraser's theory of redemption and his loyalty to 17th century Reformed orthodoxy.

A brief and selective history of the developments of the doctrine of redemption will be given to highlight its key elements and gain insight into the doctrinal context for Fraser's doctrine of redemption. Particular attention will be given to Richard Baxter, whom Fraser considered his chief theological opponent and to Fraser's dependence on Westminsterian theologians, since he considered Westminsterian particularists his allies in the fight against Baxter.

Since this is an historical assessment of Fraser's doctrine of redemption it will not defend a particular perspective nor critique Fraser in light of my personal beliefs, but will evaluate Fraser's doctrine of redemption within his own context. While Duncan Fraser's research identified the significance of Fraser's doctrine of redemption in debates of the 18th century, little work has been done to evaluate it within its contemporary theological context of the 17th century.

Several theological elements missing from Duncan Fraser's work will be introduced. Specific attention will be given to the theological developments of the 16th and 17th centuries and how they shaped Fraser's doctrine of redemption, providing a solid foundation upon which to evaluate Fraser. Fraser's self-identification as thoroughly Westminsterian has been disregarded by many of his interpreters, including Duncan Fraser. The basis of Fraser's claims to uphold the essentials of Westminsterian particularism will be re-examined to determine whether or not they were justified.

A majority of the available interpretations of Fraser's doctrine of redemption have forced Fraser into a single position by labeling him simply on the basis of his choice of terminology. A more objective understanding of the complexity of Fraser's thought will be achieved by moving beyond the choice of terms that Fraser employed to discover the fundamental elements comprising his doctrine of redemption. Then it will be possible to determine a proper classification for Fraser's doctrine of redemption and recognize where he stood in relation to his contemporaries.

Terminology, however, played a significant role in the Post-Reformation period. Theologians, including Fraser, employed a highly scholastic style of argument and language.¹⁵ To modern readers, scholasticism often appears abstract, cumbersome, and legal, but to the 17th century theologian, using precise phraseology translated to accurate theology. The danger facing researchers of this period is to either get trapped by the 17th century vocabulary or re-categorize a theologian according to the modern use of theological terminology. Efforts will be made to clarify terms according to modern scholarship, but this thesis has deliberately chosen to use much of Fraser's scholastic terminology because of the precision it provides. One of the underlying assumptions of this thesis is that Fraser's contemporaries and modern interpreters have not paid close enough attention to the subtle nuances that dramatically shaped Fraser's doctrine of redemption as a whole.

A doctrine-by-doctrine approach has been chosen for this enquiry into Fraser's *via media alia* of Christ's redemption, since it reveals Fraser's underlying beliefs, instead of inferring them from the terminology he chose to employ.¹⁶ Some interpreters have allowed their fascination with the universal extent of Christ's redemption to influence their assessments. By assuming they understood what Fraser meant by 'universal redemption,' they have failed to represent what Fraser had in mind. Fraser's other doctrinal positions have been ignored, overshadowed, or assumed to contradict his doctrine of redemption.

¹⁵ Scholasticism and the Latin language frequently went hand-in-hand. Fraser employed Latin terms because he believed they best communicated the intricacies of his argument, but he wrote in English. For this reason, this thesis has consulted some Latin texts and made use of Fraser's Latin phraseology, but extensive Latin translation was unnecessary to accomplish the immediate goals.

¹⁶ The interconnectedness of Fraser's doctrines of assurance, God's decrees, God's covenant, and faith will assist the reader in developing a more informed evaluation of his doctrine of redemption by revealing the motives and foundation upon which his doctrine of redemption was built and his concept of how it was applied to individual believers.

The thesis has been divided into three sections. Chapters I and II describe the methodology employed in this thesis, analyses the context of Fraser's doctrine of redemption, and summarizes the secondary literature. Chapters III and IV selectively survey developments in the doctrine of redemption before exposing the key elements as they appeared during the 16th and 17th century debates on Christ's redemption and thereby providing a more rounded appreciation of that doctrine.

The core of the thesis can be found in the second section, comprising a full analysis of Fraser's doctrine of redemption. In Chapter V, Fraser's doctrine of redemption is set within the context of his personal and pastoral objectives, namely, discovering firmer grounds for assurance. Fraser's personal quest for assurance was his primary motivation in embracing the broader scope of Christ's redemption. He believed his doctrine of redemption offered much greater assurance than Baxter's doctrine of conditional redemption and gave a more accessible ground for assurance than traditional Westminsterian particularism.

Chapter VI focuses upon the eternal foundation of Christ's redemption with particular attention being given to Fraser's commitment to the efficacy of God's purposes in Christ's redemption. Fraser taught there was an absolute correlation between God's design in Christ's redemption and the application of those purposes in the lives of both the elect and the reprobate. He defined 'absolute' as governing not only the efficacy of Christ's redemption to save the elect, but also a common redemption which contributes to the greater wrath received by the reprobate. By affirming the absolute nature of Christ's redemption for elect and reprobate, Fraser distanced himself from hypothetical universalism and from Arminianism and their conditional redemption and brought himself closer to the Reformed orthodoxy of his day.

Fraser understood the covenant of grace as the vehicle through which Christ's redemption was made manifest to sinners. Chapter VII examines how his notion of election and reprobation helped develop his two-fold perspective upon the covenant of grace. This did not introduce any form of conditionality to God's purposes as some commentators have suggested. For Fraser the covenant conveyed the right to receive Christ without fear of presumption and drew the elect into union with Christ to receive the full covenant benefits. Such a position connected him to Westminsterian federalism with its understanding of the absoluteness of God's covenant of grace, and distanced him from Baxter's conditional covenant of grace.

Chapter VIII scrutinizes Fraser's assumption that he offered a clear path for the personal application of God's promises. He maintained sinners needed to translate the general offer of Christ into a personal promise and only then could an individual fully benefit from Christ's redemption. He also assumed personal application would convey personal assurance from the moment faith was present. It is argued Fraser overestimated the value of his contribution towards obtaining personal assurance of salvation.

The third and final section contains the Chapter IX, the Conclusion, which summarizes the findings of the analysis of Fraser and addresses the issue of what constitutes agreement or disagreement with Reformed orthodoxy.

CHAPTER II: THE CONTEXT OF THE CONTROVERSY

2:1: The Context of Fraser's Doctrine of Redemption

The context in which Fraser's thought developed is important because it revealed Fraser's motivation for adopting his unique doctrine of Christ's redemption. The context will be discussed within four categories: personal, historical and theological, formal and polemical. The personal context describes Fraser's internal motivation and broader contemporary concerns are examined in the historical and theological context, especially the supposed threat of Arminianism within the post-Reformation period.¹ The formal context focuses upon the environment in which Fraser's doctrine of redemption was written and published and the polemical context identifies the individuals against whom Fraser argued over Christ's redemption.

2.1.1 Fraser's Struggle for Personal Assurance

Fraser's doctrine of redemption originated in his personal struggles to find assurance, a struggle described in detail throughout the pages of his autobiography. From early childhood, he had a unique sensitivity to the guilt of his sin. He recounted that even from a young age, guilt weighed heavily on his heart. Fraser's father died when Fraser was a young boy. In addition to the natural burdens that any child would feel at the loss of his father, Fraser was left with the cumbersome duty of dealing with his father's many financial debts. These obligations weighed heavily on Fraser's

¹ Within the 17th century, Arminianism became a generic label assigned to anything that appeared to deviate from the Reformed *status quo*. Fraser, himself, was accused of Arminianism in relation to his doctrine of universal redemption. Another example of the over zealousness of some within the Reformed community to brand individuals with the label 'Arminian' was the Marrow Controversy of the 18th century, with which Fraser's teachings were associated. The insecurities of those within the Reformed churches in Scotland resulted in an initial condemnation of the teachings of several of the Marrowmen, who were supposedly propagating Arminian doctrines. This condemnation, however, was later reversed, and the church issued an apology for its erroneous judgment. See, *Marrow*, 270ff. Lachman actually relates the initial condemnation of the *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* and the Marrowmen to a fear of Antinomianism incited by "the Baxterians and Neonomians.," 491.

mind throughout the remainder of his life and often contributed to Fraser's melancholy disposition.²

Searching for a remedy, he resolved to perform his religious "duties" with greater diligence.³ He hoped his faithfulness would be rewarded with an increased sense of God's pleasure; however, despite momentary respites, Fraser continued to feel anxious.⁴ Whyte describes Fraser's autobiography as an extended commentary on Romans 7, including a constant wrestling to hold onto the promises of God.⁵

Fraser continued to labor to secure God's favor through his own efforts until one night the words of 1 Timothy 1:15 began to resonate in his heart. He explained the Apostle Paul's declaration that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," were the words that God used to open his eyes to the reality of God's grace. Through this experience, Fraser caught a vision of the "superabounding" grace of God, which revolutionized his conception of the gospel and the covenant of grace, and radically influenced the way in which Fraser understood the nature of salvation.⁶ From that point, Fraser became determined to apply personally what he learned and to share his understanding with others so they too might believe with confidence. Much of Fraser's work concerning the doctrine of redemption was aimed at (a) providing sinners with justification for believing that Christ's offer of salvation applied to them and (b) encouraging greater assurance in the act of believing. His desire to share the freeing power of the gospel was the motivation behind his leaving his legal studies, becoming licensed to preach in 1670, and writing *A Treatise on Justifying Faith*.⁷

² Fraser, J., *Memoirs of the Rev. James Fraser, of Brea* (Edinburgh: The Religious Tract and Book Society, 1889), 1, 3 and 5.

³ *Memoirs*, 3.

⁴ Whyte cites Fraser's tendency to overly examine himself as one of his chief weaknesses. See, Whyte, A., *James Fraser, Laird of Brea* (Edinburgh: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1911), 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁶ Fraser, J. "Mr James Frasers Life Writen by Himself," *Wodrow Collection* (N.D.), 93-94. Fraser was most likely converted during his time at university, around 1656-57.

⁷ Fraser was licensed to preach in 1670 by the northern presbytery of the Church of Scotland. See, Callow, J. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 20, H.C.G. Matthew and B. Harrison. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 842-844.

2.1.2: Fraser's Historical and Theological Context

Fraser's role as a Covenanter cannot be separated from his ministry as a pastor and theologian. He wrote his treatises in a defensive posture, inheriting from his theological predecessors the fear 'false religion' was always seeking to gain a foothold in the Scottish church. Though Fraser was chiefly concerned with providing a rebuttal to the legalism of Baxter, as a Covenanter he was committed to defending Reformed orthodoxy against all theological foes. Born just one year after the original signing of the National Covenant of 1638 and having a father dedicated to the covenanting movement, Fraser was conscious from an early age that his religious tradition was under attack.⁸ He understood Baxterianism to be merely another incarnation of the false religion infecting the Scottish church as far back as 1603 when the kingdoms of Scotland and England were united under James I.

When the king of Scotland, James VI, became James I of England, he began to drift away from the Reformed Presbyterianism he had pledged to uphold and became increasingly influenced by Episcopalianism, considered by most Reformed Presbyterians to be 'Arminian.'⁹ The personal reorientation of James I's theological

⁸ Coffey explains, "The National Covenant of 1638, therefore, was nothing new. Along with the 'covenants' of 1560, 1581, 1590 and 1596, it simply mended the 'external' covenant relationship between God and the nation which was first established at the time of Scotland's conversion to Christianity but had been repeatedly broken by apostasy." See, Coffey, J., *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 167. See also, Williamson, A. H., *Scottish National Consciousness in the Age of James VI: The Apocalypse, the Union and the Shaping of Scotland's Public Culture* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers LTD, 1979), 68. For an explanation of the Covenanters' understanding of why they felt compelled to sign the National Covenant of 1638, see, *Causes of the Lords Wrath Against Scotland, Manifested in His Sad Late Dispensations* (1653), 5. For these men, it was not the politics motivating them. They truly believed their response to what they considered to be a heretical government was their spiritual duty as a covenanted country. The National Covenant, according to the Covenanters, was a treaty between Scotland and heaven. See also, *Reasons Against the Rendering of Our Sworne and Subscribed Confession of Faith* (N.P.: N.D.); Ashe, S., *Religious Covenanting Directed, and Covenant-Keeping Perswaded* (London: G.M., 1646), 1; Henderson, G. D., *Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 164 and Kierman, V.G. *Covenant, Charter, and Party: Traditions of Revolt and Protest in Modern Scottish History* (Brotherstone, T. ed. (Aberdeen: 1989), 31.

⁹ Morrill remarks, "The National Covenant, by contrast, is a critique of a system of government. The draft towards popery and tyranny is specifically dated back to the reign of James VI, and even to Parliaments and General Assemblies which predated James's move to England." See, Morrill, J. *The Scottish National Covenant in Its British Context* Morrill, J. ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 13. King James sent delegates to the Synod of Dort to defend Reformed orthodoxy from the Remonstrants, but there is evidence his allegiance began to shift and that he "sought increasingly to distance himself from Calvinism." See, Tyacke, N., *Aspects of English Protestantism (1530-1700)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 166. Tyacke explains that by mid-1622, James began to rethink his condemnation of Arminianism. Tyacke, N., *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, C. 1590-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 103 and 105. For a contrasting

and ecclesiastical allegiances towards Arminianism did little, if anything, to impact the religious practices of Scottish Presbyterianism, but they established the course of change which would radically affect the Scottish church in years to come. Charles I continued his father's efforts to promote reform within Anglicanism. According to him, reform included not only changes within pastoral care and introducing new forms of liturgy, it also demanded the suppression Calvinism.¹⁰ To see that these reforms took place, he appointed bishops William Laud and Richard Neile.¹¹ Charles I further alienated himself from his subjects in Scotland by insisting on an Episcopalian "High Church ceremony" at his Scottish coronation in 1633.¹²

He surely overestimated their willingness to accept his Arminian theology and Episcopalian ecclesiology. Most Scottish Presbyterians believed that although the king ruled with a God-given authority, there was a limitation to his sovereignty. He had a religious duty to defend biblical religion, but his powers were civil and not ecclesiastical. Christ was the sole head of the church and the king of England and Scotland was a subject of the King of kings and Lord of lords.¹³

perspective, see, Como, D. *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, C. 1560-1660* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2000), 266.

¹⁰ Charles I twice issued royal decrees calling for the suppression of Calvinism, particularly the doctrine of predestination. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 167. See also, Como, D. R., "Predestination and Political Conflict in Laud's London," *The Historical Journal* 46, no. 2 (2003): 266.

¹¹ Tyacke, *Aspects*, 166. In 1633, Laud was elevated to Archbishop of Canterbury. Nicolas Tyacke describes Laud as "a passionate anti-Calvinist," who argued that Calvinism was wholly "incompatible with the practice of piety and obedience." See, 167 and 169. Many scholars agree that Laud was the chief figure responsible for popularizing Arminianism in England and Scotland during the 17th century. See also, Martin, H., *Puritanism and Richard Baxter* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1954), 135, Associate Presbytery, *Act of the Associate Presbytery, Concerning the Doctrine of Grace* (Edinburgh: Neill and Company, 1789), iv and Mullan, D. G., *Scottish Puritanism 1590-1638* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1. White challenges the accepted position of Laud's commitment to Arminianism, stating that "the only evidence [he] adduces in support was that he had 'scraped out with his hand' the phrase 'Father of thine elect' from the Prayer Book." See, White, P., *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church From the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 311. Despite White's objections, however, there appears to be greater evidence to incriminate Laud of Arminianism than White is willing to recognize. Baillie, R., *A Scotch Antidote Against the English Infection of Arminianism* (London: 1652) and Baillie, R., *The Life of William (Laud) Now Lord Archbishop of Canterbury Examined* (London: 1643).

¹² Coffey, J., *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2000), 129. See also, Macinnes, A. I., *Charles I and the Making of the Covenanting Movement 1625-1641* (Edinburgh: 1991) and Mathew, D., *Scotland Under Charles I* (London: 1955).

¹³ "National Covenant," *DSCH&T*, 620. Rutherford wrote *Lex, Rex* in 1644, delineating his thoughts on the relationship between ecclesiastical and civil authority. See, Rutherford, S., *Lex, Rex: The Law and the Prince* (London: 1644). Alexander Henderson and David Dickson explained, "The necessitie of Covenanting, which containeth nothing contrarie to the Acts of Parliament, nor to the duetie of

On February 28, 1638, in Greyfriars' Kirkyard the Covenanters restated their commitment to Reformed Presbyterianism as the only orthodox religion by signing the National Covenant, despite the king's effort to undercut its legitimacy. During the turmoil of the next twenty years of military, political and religious conflict, the Scottish Covenanters not only repeated their commitment to promoting Reformed Presbyterianism in Scotland, but in 1643, swearing allegiance in the Solemn League and Covenant, Scottish Presbyterians extended the scope of their efforts of ecclesiastical reform to include England and Wales.¹⁴ In 1649, Charles II was forced to affirm the Covenants before the Scots would proceed with his coronation.

good subjects, but is the largest Testimonie of our Fidelitie to God, and loyaltie to our King." Henderson, A. and D. Dickson, *The Answeres of Some Brethren of the Ministrie, to the Replies of the Ministers and Professours of Divinitie in Aberdene; Concerning the Late Covenant* (Aberdene: Edward Raban, 1638), 13. Additionally, J. Stuart and J. Stirling described what was at stake in the National Covenant, "And this covenant we make in the presence of Almighty God, the searcher of all hearts, with a true intention to perform the same, as we shall answer at that great day when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed; most humbly beseeching the Lord to strengthen us by his Holy Spirit for this end, and to bless our desires and proceedings with such success as may be deliverance and safety to his people, and encouragement to other Christian Churches groaning under or in danger of the yoke of antichristian tyranny, or to join in the same or like association and covenant, to the glory of God, the enlargement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the peace and tranquility of Christian kingdoms and commonwealths." See, Stuart, J. and J. Stirling, *Naphtali, or the Wrestlings of the Church of Scotland for the Kingdom of Christ* (Perth: James Dewar & Son, 1845), 58. See also, Webster, J., *A Second Defence of the Lawful Prejudices, Containing a Vindication of the Obligation on of the National Covenant and Solemn League, In Answer to a Letter From the Country* (Edinburgh: 1707), 7. Not all Scots joined the Covenanters. The 'Aberdeen doctors' challenged the Covenanters' authority to sanction the National Covenant of 1638, since "it was not sent down by the King, the Lords of the Councell, a Nationall Synod, or by any Judicatorie." See, *General Demands Concerning the Late Covenant: Propounded by the Ministers and Professors of Divinity in Aberdene, to Some Reverend Brethren, Who Came Thither to Recommend the Late Covenant to Them, and to Those Who Are Committed to Their Charge*. (His Majesties Printer for Scotland: 1638).

¹⁴ Shields recounts the events when Charles II covenanted with his subjects in Scotland, stating, "National and Solemn League and Covenants: which the Church and State both in their Representatives and Members, did most solemnly Swear and Subscribe [sic], for themselves and Posterity: which, for the matter of them perpetually obliging, for the manner so Religiously engaged into, and for their ends so Glorious, no power on Earth can dispense with, disannull [sic], or disable: which not only the Lord from Heaven did ratify, by the Conversion of many Thousands, and vouchsafing his presence gracious in Ordinances and propitious in Providences at the subscribing of them; But in this Land, at the Inauguration of the King Charles 2. (being the condition upon which he was admitted to the Government) the latter of these Covenants was Ratified and Established, as the great fundamental Law of the Kingdom, whereon all the Rights and Privileges either of King or People are principally bottomed and secured, and as the very *Magna Charta* of our Reformation." See, Shields, A., *A Short Memorial of the Sufferings and Grievances, Past and Present, of the Presbyterians in Scotland: Particularly of Those of Them Called by Nick-Name Cameronians* 1690), 3. Charles II and the Scots were defeated at Worcester in that same year. Scotland remained largely under English control and Charles II was exiled. Upon his return to Britain in 1660 after Cromwell's death in 1658, Charles II relinquished his allegiance to Scottish Presbyterianism, which ignited twenty-eight years of persecutions, referred to often as the "killing times" in Covenanting history. See, Coffey, *Persecution*, 168-169.

However, he did not remain faithful to his oath and began to issue policies contradicting his professed loyalties following the Restoration in 1660. In 1662, the Act of Uniformity was passed “requiring all clergy to be episcopally ordained, to renounce the Solemne League and Covenant, and to assent to the new Prayer Book.”¹⁵ Writing later, but echoing the response of these early Covenanters to such decrees, Fraser wrote, “A pastor as a minister of Christ and by authority first from Christ then from the Church is impowered both to preach and due his doctisonall acts and dogmentall acts.”¹⁶ Fraser was claiming Reformed Presbyterian ministers received their authority to preach and teach, not from the king, but from Christ. By rejecting Charles II’s claim of authority over the church, Arminian theology, and Episcopalian form of government, Fraser and the post-Restoration were judged traitors, guilty of treason and thousands were executed in Edinburgh over a twenty-eight year period. Though Fraser was never executed, his three separate imprisonments and the hardships he enduring throughout his ministry testify he considered it his covenanted duty to sacrifice his freedom and personal safety to ensure the Reformed religion of Scotland was preserved.¹⁷

2.1.3: Fraser’s Formal Context

The formal context of Fraser’s doctrine of redemption, like the historical and theological context, is linked with Fraser’s involvement with the covenanting movement. As a Covenanter, Fraser opposed Episcopalian ecclesiology and the Arminianism that was presumed to accompany it. Ordained in 1672 by the Field Presbytery of Moray, it was not long before Fraser’s unwavering dedication to the covenanting cause resulted in his arrest.¹⁸ The Field Presbytery of Moray included a

¹⁵ Coffey, *Persecution*, 168.

¹⁶ Fraser, J. *Wodrow Collection* (N.D.), 16. See also, Fraser, J., *Prelacy an Idol, and Prelates Idolaters: All Prelatists, Maintainers of, and Complyers With Prelacy, Charg’d With Idolatry, and Proven Guilty; a Sermon* (Glasgow: 1742) and Fraser, J., *The Lawfulness and Duty of Separation From Corrupt Members and Churches Explained and Vindicated* (Edinburgh: 1744). Fraser condemned the corruption of some ministers who, according to Fraser, foolishly “will Sacrifice Honour, and Conscience” to serve their earthly king rather than worshiping and following King Jesus. See also, Cowan, I. B., *The Scottish Covenanters 1660-1688* (London: Victor Gollancz LTD, 1976), 107.

¹⁷ He was writing in ‘the killing times’ of the covenanting period. See, Wodrow, R., *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland From Restoration to Revolution* (Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1835) and Smellie, A., *Men of the Covenant* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), xvii-xxii.

¹⁸ King recounts that Fraser was arrested and charged with “rending the church of Christ, and holding field conventicles.” See, King, R., *The Covenanters in the North* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1846), 367. The term ‘conventicles’ dates back to its use during the early church and was used

group of ministers who had been ejected from the church by Charles II's efforts to suppress Presbyterianism. Their authority was not recognized by the government but the dissenters still acknowledged their jurisdiction. On 29 January 1677, Fraser was taken before the privy council in Edinburgh, found guilty of efforts to oppose the king's religion, and ordered to serve out his sentence on the Bass Rock.¹⁹ His imprisonment on the Bass Rock was the first and longest of several terms of incarceration.²⁰ However, Fraser made good use of his time by studying Greek and Hebrew, preaching, and writing his momentous work, *A Treatise on Justifying Faith*, the appendix of which became the catalyst for the next several hundred years of controversy over the correct interpretation of Fraser's doctrine of redemption.

Though written as a single treatise, Fraser's work on justifying faith was published in two parts. The first part in 1722 received no particular attention, but when the second half was published in 1749, the reaction ensured Fraser's place in the annals of Scottish theological history.²¹ There is some debate regarding the authenticity of Fraser's authorship. He was never called before his presbytery or charged with teaching anything outside the parameters of his professed subscription to the Westminster Standards. Accordingly, Adam Gib, Fraser's chief opponent in the 18th century, suspected Fraser was not the author of *A Treatise on Justifying Faith*. Thomas Mair, whose father served with Fraser in Culross and who defended Fraser's doctrine of redemption, maintained against Gib's speculations that "The Book is not only ascribed to Mr. Fraser, but is really his Composure."²²

synonymously with 'the church.' In time, however, the term was used to denote the meetings of the religious minority and dissenters. During Charles II's reign, conventicles were not sanctioned, and therefore were viewed as acts of treason.

¹⁹ See, *Dictionary of National Biography*, 647. See also, Fraser, *Memoirs*, *Wodrow*, 9 and Grant, M., *No King but Christ: The Story of Donald Cargill* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1988), 71.

²⁰ Fraser's imprisonment on Bass Rock was the largest period of time spent in captivity, but it was not the only sentence he served. In December 1681 he spent several weeks in Blackness Castle before his release was granted under the condition of immediate exile. While in exile in England, Fraser was again arrested in July 1683 for refusing to swear the Oxford oath. In 1687, Fraser returned to Scotland and within a couple of years became the minister at Culross. He served this congregation until his death in 1699. See, Cumming, J. E., *Holy Men of God From St. Augustine to Yesterday* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1893), 122 and *Dictionary of National Biography*, 647.

²¹ All of Fraser's theological treatises were posthumously published during the years 1713 to 1749.

²² *Case*, 60. Mair argued, that Christ died for all "in respect of ordinate or appointed Sufficiency." Nevertheless, Mair is recounted as saying, "I sincerely declare, That I have no Objection against, or Difficulty about any of these Articles, as exprest in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms." Mair, T., *Reasons of Mr Thomas Mair of Orwell to the Associate Synod of 1755, for Not Acquiescing in Their Act of 1754* (Edinburgh: S. Wilson and Company, 1756), 23. These two statements by Mair

A Treatise on Justifying Faith was not the only book credited to Fraser which describes the doctrine of universal redemption. Most, if not all, of Fraser's writings would have to be wrongly ascribed in order to distance Fraser from the doctrine of universal redemption. Furthermore, Alexander Brodie recorded his discouragements over Fraser's tending towards Arminianism by teaching the doctrine of universal redemption.²³ John Carstares and Allan Logan are also mentioned among Fraser's contemporaries who identified his belief in the universal extent of Christ's redemption.²⁴

The disruption Fraser's doctrine of redemption caused to the Reformed Presbytery and the Associate Synod has greatly influenced subsequent interpretations. The assumption has continued that by broadening the scope of Christ's redemption Fraser irreconcilably deviated from Reformed orthodoxy.

2.1.4: Fraser's Polemical Context

The polemical context clarifies Fraser's chief theological allies and opponents. For his allies, Fraser principally cites Westminster Divines, though he recognized his level of commitment to Reformed orthodoxy might be questioned based on his choice in terminology. He stated his agreement with the Confession and with those who advocated the doctrine of particular redemption, asserting that "in some Things expresses myself diversly from [particularists] tho' not contrary to them."²⁵ Fraser considered his explanation more helpful than the description provided by traditional particularists but did not alter the core of Reformed particularism, its stance on the absolute efficacy of Christ's redemptive efforts.

Fraser's theological opponents covered a wide variety, including Roman Catholics, Quakers, Arminians, and Richard Baxter. First, although writing over a

illustrate the challenge facing Fraser's interpreters. One must determine whether there is any room in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms for an element of universality in Christ's redemption. Mair was unable to convince his accusers and was removed from his ministerial charge.

²³ Brodie, A., *The Diary of Alexander Brodie of Brodie, 1652-1680, and of His Son, James Brodie of Brodie, 1680-1685* (Aberdeen: 1863), 392.

²⁴ *JFB*, 318 and Macleod, J., *Scottish Theology in Relation to Church History Since the Reformation* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1946), 176.

²⁵ *JF*, 161. Fraser claimed that there was no disagreement between his universal redemption and the system of doctrines set out in the Westminster Standards, stating that the only article with which it could be "alleged" he disagreed was VIII.8, wherein it is declared that all those redeemed "he [Christ] doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same." However, Fraser claimed even this article was congruent with his views. See, *JF*, 251.

century after the Scottish Reformation, Fraser presumed the constant threat of a return to Catholicism.²⁶ He felt compelled to denounce Catholicism's doctrine of redemption which taught a sinner's standing before God was conditional and dependent on his own ability to merit saving righteousness.²⁷

Secondly, Fraser identified the Quakers as his theological adversaries, though having associated with Quakers for a time. King remarks that "Being in Edinburgh in 1663, he fell in with some Quakers, and was much taken with their system."²⁸ It is assumed by several of Fraser's interpreters that it is the Quakers' understanding of redemption that most influenced Fraser's own. However, by the time that he entered the ministry and wrote his treatises, Fraser was firmly aligned against the conditional redemption proposed by the Quakers, accusing it of perverting the truth and undercutting God's grace.²⁹

The Arminians were every Reformed theologian's arch-enemy and Fraser was no exception.³⁰ He despised the notion Christ's redemption only secured the

²⁶ Scotland's formal break with Roman Catholicism was in 1560. For details regarding the Reformation in Scotland, see, Cowan, I. B., *The Scottish Reformation* (London: 1982) and *DSCH&T*, 693-698.

²⁷ Fraser, like most of his Reformed contemporaries, considered the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification to be conditional based on the fact that (a) human merit was an essential component for an individual to be declared righteous and (b) justification could be won and lost several times based on human performance. According to Fraser, the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification destroyed the chance for personal assurance of salvation, the driving force behind his theological endeavors. See, *JFSF*, 42.

²⁸ King, *The Covenanters in the North*, 376.

²⁹ *JF*, 32 and *JFSF*, 261. One of the elements of Quaker theology that Fraser might have found more repugnant, though he did not expound on the Quakers' doctrines, was the notion that human perfection was achievable in this life through obedience to the "Light." See, Barbour, H. and J. W. Frost, *The Quakers* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 62. Even Baxter took issue with the Quakers' understanding of justification and sanctification calling them "papists." See, Barbour, H., *The Quakers in Puritan England* (London: Yale University Press, 1964), 138-139. Fraser employed the same type of argument Baxter used against the Quakers to challenge Baxter's doctrine of conditional redemption. See, *JF*, 179 and 181.

³⁰ Proctor explains, "Responsibility was assumed by the whole of Calvinism for the theology of any part of the whole, the slightest divergence from the recognised authorities being condemned. Novelty was the dread of the age and the strength of the Reformed Churches was directed to the protection of the Faith once delivered, orthodoxy being closely connected with uniformity of belief among the sister Churches." According to the Reformed community of churches, Arminianism was a constant threat, demanding the churches' full attention. Problematically, however, this led many theologians to adopt a "guilty until proven innocent" policy for all those suspected of propagating Arminian teachings. Fraser became a victim of this frenzy created by fear of any theology that did not meet the standards of uniformity. Proctor, *The Theology of Moise Amyraut*, 14.

possibility of salvation, undermining the sovereignty of God's grace to save.³¹ He believed that his *via media alia* would prove to be the undoing of the Arminian doctrine of universal redemption.

Of all the theological rivals that Fraser wrote against, Richard Baxter was the most significant. Baxter openly professed his agreement with the hypothetical universalism popularized by Amyraut. It follows that, if Baxter affirmed Amyraut, Fraser's approval of hypothetical universalism needs be called into question. According to Fraser, it was the spread of Baxter's neonomianism that kept many Christians in bondage to fear and doubt.³² For both of these reasons, Baxter's doctrine of redemption has been given a prominent place in the reassessment of Fraser's doctrine of redemption.

2:2: The Disruptive Impact of Fraser's Doctrine of Redemption in the Scottish Kirk in the 18th century

When considering the contextualizing elements for the proper interpretation of Fraser's understanding of Christ's redemption, one must take into account the fact that his theory of redemption was published posthumously. The controversies which occurred within the Reformed Presbytery and the Associate Synod in the mid-18th century obviously did not impact the writing of Fraser's works but, nevertheless, provide an important historical foundation for the interpretation of his two-fold theory of redemption. The debates in these Scottish communions established a certain set of assumptions about Fraser's perspective on redemption, which continue to govern many of the interpretations of his system. This section will highlight Fraser's disruptive influence on the Reformed Presbytery and the Associate Synod and will consider the patterns of interpretation established.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPC) was formed by ministers who sought to distance themselves from the majority of the Church of Scotland following the Revolution Settlement (1690).³³ Also known as the Cameronians, based on the

³¹ *JF*, 32.

³² See, *JF*, 141. Fraser writes, "I perceived that our divinity was much altered from what it was in the primitive reformers' time...I perceived a gospel spirit to be in very few, and that the most part yea of ministers did woefully confound the two covenants, and were of an Old Testament spirit; and little of the glory of Christ, grace, and gospel, did shine in their writings and preaching. But I abhorred and was at enmity with Mr. Baxter, as a stated enemy to the grace of God, under the cover of opposing some Antinomianism." *Memoirs*, 233.

³³ *DSCH&T*, 698.

name of one of their founders Richard Cameron, the church re-affirmed a commitment to the principles of the National Covenant of 1638. In 1743, Thomas Nairn left the Associate Synod to join John MacMillan in the RPC. This plurality enabled this small covenanting church to constitute itself the Reformed Presbytery at Breahead on August 1st. Becoming a presbytery allowed them to ordain ministers and expand the mission of the church. In subsequent years five more ministers joined with the original two; Alexander Marshall, James Hall, Hugh Innes, John Cuthbertson and John MacMillan, the elder MacMillan's son.

After the 1749 publication of the second portion of *Justifying Faith*, Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption soon incited a controversy among this newly constituted communion. In April, 1753, the Reformed Presbytery called a meeting at Brownhill in the parish of Bothwell to discuss growing concerns over the influence of Fraser's teachings within the presbytery.³⁴ There were nine members of the presbytery present; four ministers and five elders.³⁵ Hugh Innes presided over the meeting.³⁶ When the debates commenced, the division among the presbyters was evident. The MacMillans quickly condemned Fraser's universal scheme, particularly the notion that Christ's redemption included "evangelical wrath." Hall and Innes were not fond of this negative aspect of Fraser's teaching on Christ's redemption either, but they used the opportunity to argue for the broader extent of Christ's redemption.

Fraser's doctrine of redemption was scrutinized for two days before it was put to a vote. When the vote was finally taken, those supporting the universal extent of Christ's redemption came out on the losing end. The MacMillans as well as three elders denounced Fraser's views. The minority, led by Hall, refused to accept the verdict, and the next morning, they attempted to overturn the decision. This attempt failed. Feeling so strongly that the gospel was at stake, the minority immediately established a new body, claiming to be the true Reformed Presbytery.³⁷

³⁴ Reid, H. M. B., *A Cameronian Apostle: Being Some Account of John Macmillan of Balmaghie* (London: Alexander Gardner, 1896), 198.

³⁵ John Cuthbertson was in America.

³⁶ This meant he did not have a vote, which would be a factor in the minority appeal.

³⁷ Hall and Innes' case for the breach of the Reformed Presbytery was argued in their pamphlet, *Reformed Presbytery, The True State of the Difference Between the Reformed Presbytery, and Some Brethren Who Lately Deserted Them Together With A Vindication of the Presbytery's Principles Concerning the Extent of Christ's Death* (Edinburgh: William Gray, 1753). Hall and Innes maintained,

There is no doubt Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption was the catalyst for the breach within the Reformed Presbytery. John MacMillian wrote *A Serious Examination* (1754) in response to Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption and the minority's desertion.³⁸ However, there is evidence to suggest the minority were not committed to the particulars of Fraser's two-fold system, especially his understanding of evangelical wrath. It is suggested that the minority merely used the opportunity to advance a more commonly held notion of universal redemption. By rejecting Fraser's concept of evangelical wrath, the minority struck at the foundation of Fraser's two-fold, absolute paradigm. The secondary effect of Christ's redemption, which resulted in the doctrine of evangelical wrath, was a necessary implication of guarding Fraser's doctrine of redemption against conditionalism. According to Fraser, the reprobate was not redeemed merely to a "state of probation," which inevitably distanced the benefits of redemption from God's decreed ends.³⁹

The minority Reformed Presbytery's partial acceptance of Fraser's teaching opened the door for confusion over the particulars of his absolute, two-fold scheme. This could be a partial explanation for why Fraser is often associated with hypothetical universalism or other forms of conditional redemption. By adopting some portions of Fraser's paradigm and rejecting others, the Reformed Presbytery set a precedent for interpreting his thought. It became typical to affirm some aspects and to decline others without doing damage to the whole of his system. This thesis challenges this practice, believing that the piecemeal approach to Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption necessarily misrepresents the cohesion of his absolutist position.

"To assert the Universality of Christ's Satisfaction, in respect of its Object, has no necessary Connection with the *Arminian* Error, that hereby he procured for all Men sufficient subjective Grace, whereby they can believe unto Salvation, without being indebted unto any efficacious and irresistible Operation of the Spirit of God persuading and enabling thereunto; unless it can be proven, that the Satisfaction in Dispute was ordained to produce that Effect, and that there was no particular Decree concerning the final State of every Man; both of which are false," 26-27. They challenged the objectivity of the Reformed Presbytery's decision, claiming that one individual was so caught up with a passion to condemn Fraser's teaching that "it was with great difficulty that the others in the courts restrained him from condemning those verses to which Fraser appealed as "*Arminian* Scriptures."

³⁸ John MacMillian responded to Hall and Innes in the pamphlet, Reformed Presbyterian Church, *A Serious Examination* (Edinburgh: W. Gray, 1754). For another account of how Fraser's doctrine of redemption influenced the disruption in the Reformed Presbytery, see, Umpherston, *Observations on a Wolf in a Sheep-Skin* (1753).

³⁹ *JFB*, 590.

The disruption in the Reformed Presbytery caused by Fraser's doctrine of redemption had a corresponding effect among the Anti-burghers of the Associate Synod. Constituted in 1745, the Associate Synod grew out of the Associate Presbytery, which was formed in 1733 when Ebenezer Erskine, William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff and James Fisher seceded from the Church of Scotland in protest against the Restoration Settlement patronage and the treatment of *Marrowmen*.⁴⁰ Though the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland voted to restore the four men a year later and even elected Erskine as its moderator, the seceders declined to return.⁴¹ By 1739, the Associate Presbytery had declared legitimate ecclesiastical jurisdiction as a true church and had added Ralph Erskine, Thomas Mair, Thomas Nairn and James Thomason as pastors.⁴² In 1740, the Church of Scotland finally deposed the eight ministers.⁴³

By 1747, only two years after constituting themselves as a synod with three presbyteries, the Associate Synod found itself embroiled in controversy over the right response to the Burgess Oath. The Burgess Oath required citizens of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth to endorse "the religion professed in the realm."⁴⁴ There was some confusion regarding whether the pledge sanctioned practices of the Church of Scotland previously condemned by the Secession Church or whether it simply restated a commitment to Reformed Presbyterianism. Eventually, the disagreement led to "The Breach," the title given to the split within the Associate Synod.⁴⁵ Those who refused to denounce the Burgess Oath became known as the 'Burghers,' and those opposed to the Burgess Oath were aptly referred to as the 'Anti-Burghers.' James Fisher and the Erskines sided with the Burghers. Alexander Moncrieff, Adam Gib and Thomas Mair, on the other hand, concluded that the oath was out of accord with the principles of the Secession Church. The division led the way to the creation of the General Associate Synod (Anti-Burghers) and the Associate (Burghers)

⁴⁰ *JFB*, 601. Mair stipulated to the commitments of those belonging to the Associate Presbytery in, Mair, T., *Bond of the Covenant Sworn by the Ministers of the Associate Presbytery*, 28 Dec. 1743 (Edinburgh: Fr. Schenck, 1743).

⁴¹ *DSCH&T*, 35.

⁴² Thomas Nairn ended up leaving the Associate Presbytery to join John MacMillan in forming the Reformed Presbyterian Church discussed previously. See, *DSCH&T*, 36.

⁴³ *DSCH&T*, 36.

⁴⁴ *DSCH&T*, 109.

⁴⁵ *DSCH&T*, 109.

Synod.⁴⁶ It was in the General Associate Synod of the Secession Church in which Fraser's doctrine of redemption ignited further conflict.⁴⁷

When the second portion of Fraser's *Treatise on Justifying Faith* was published in 1749, Mair vocalized his support of Fraser's two-fold scheme of Christ's redemption. Mair believed a universal redemption was needed to warrant the universal proclamation of the gospel and lasting assurance.⁴⁸ Mair's father, George Mair, served with Fraser in Culross, and it is believed, therefore, that the younger Mair was familiar with the particulars of Fraser's thought from childhood.⁴⁹ Mair's support for Fraser's doctrine of redemption was met with a shift and harsh rebuttal from the other members of the General Associate Synod. Gib submitted seven articles as an act against what he referred to as "the Arminian doctrine of universal redemption" in hopes he could arrest the spread of erroneous doctrines.⁵⁰ The synod overwhelmingly sustained Gib's pronouncements, and Mair stood alone in his dissension of the act.⁵¹

The conviction of the majority was that "This universal Scheme is for abolishing the *peculiar Capacity* in which our Lord died; that of his being a *complete Surety*."⁵² To broaden the extent of Christ's redemption beyond the elect, according to the Synod, necessarily undermined the absolute nature of redemption and introduced a "*new Mode of Arminianism*."⁵³ Linking Fraser's doctrine of redemption with the universalism of Arminius and the Remonstrants meant certain condemnation. At the time, it was presupposed that an affiliation with Arminianism

⁴⁶ Associate Synod, *Acts and Proceedings of the Associate Synod, at Edinburgh, in April, 1747* (Edinburgh: William Gray, 1747) and Associate Synod, *A Vindication of the Proceedings of the Associate Synod, Met at Edinburgh, April 10th, 1747. and Particularly, of Their Act of the 16th of the Month, Concerning the Ministers and Elders Presently in the Way of Separating From the Associate Synod* (Edinburgh: W.Cheyne, 1748).

⁴⁷ Couper, "A Breach in the Reformed Presbytery, 1753," 1-2.

⁴⁸ Mair qualified his agreement, stating, "I am not to undertake the Vindication nor Defence of every thing in that Treatise of *Brae's*,--and have all along declared, that there are some Things in it which I do not understand, and some Things which, if I take up his Meaning, I cannot go in with." Mair, *Reasons of Mr Thomas Mair of Orwell*, ii and 25.

⁴⁹ *DSCH&T*, 538.

⁵⁰ Associate Synod, *Act of the Associate Synod at Edinburgh, April 18 1754*.

⁵¹ Mair, *Reasons of Mr Thomas Mair of Orwell*, xi.

⁵² *Proceedings*, 62.

⁵³ *Proceedings*, iii.

entailed a rejection of the system of doctrine contained in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.

Mair challenged the idea that Fraser's two-fold understanding of redemption advanced the conditional redemption espoused by the Arminians, reminding the Synod that Fraser explicitly directed his writings against "*Arminians and Baxterians*."⁵⁴ Thus, he maintained, affinity for Fraser's doctrine of redemption did not establish a "*New Confession of Faith*."⁵⁵ Mair explained, "I sincerely declare, That I have no Objection against, or Difficulty about any of these Articles, as exprest in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms" and clarified, "I declare my Abhorrance of all *Arminian* Tenets and Doctrines."⁵⁶

Eventually, the Synod acknowledged that Mair refused the Arminian tenet that Christ died for all equally, which suggests the Synod recognized some distinction between Fraser's two-fold paradigm and the Arminians' universalism. However, the Synod concluded that the division of Christ's redemption for different ends for the elect and reprobate was invalid, and thus, opened the door for Arminianism.⁵⁷ Mair could not convince the Synod of the orthodoxy of Fraser's system. He was asked to disavow his views. Unwilling to do so, Mair was deposed from the ministry in 1757.

The debates which occurred in the Reformed Presbytery and the Associate Synod regarding Fraser's doctrine of redemption provide more than a history lesson. They foreshadowed the controversies concerning an accurate interpretation of Fraser's two-fold system with which this thesis will interact. The fact that several members of the Reformed Presbytery used Fraser's doctrine of redemption as means to gain support for a more generalized view of universal redemption made it convenient for future interpreters simply to assume the compatibility of Fraser's views with hypothetical universalism. A more faithful representation of Fraser's teachings was promoted by Mair within the disputes of the Associate Synod. Mair, however, was only one man. His influence was greatly limited, and appreciation for the nuances of Fraser's two-fold absolutism was easily forgotten. The controversies

⁵⁴ Mair, *Reasons of Mr Thomas Mair of Orwell*, xv.

⁵⁵ Mair, *Reasons of Mr Thomas Mair of Orwell*, xv.

⁵⁶ Mair, *Reasons of Mr Thomas Mair of Orwell*, 22 and *Case*, 15.

⁵⁷ Mair, *Reasons of Mr Thomas Mair of Orwell*, 49.

which took place in the Reformed Presbytery and the Associate Synod regarding Fraser's doctrine of redemption established a pattern of interpretation which this thesis seeks to re-evaluate. The goal is to be informed by the historical developments in these denominations but not restricted by past interpretations and conclusions.

2.3: Interpreting Fraser's Doctrine of Redemption

Fraser's *via media alia* has perplexed theologians for centuries, and the corpus of secondary literature testifies to the challenges of deciphering his two-fold doctrine of redemption. Nevertheless, interpretations of Fraser's doctrine of redemption fall into one of four categories: (1) Fraser has been identified as an advocate of Arminius' doctrine of redemption.⁵⁸ This was the prevailing assumption of Fraser's 18th century critics. (2) Fraser has been understood to have affirmed the doctrine of hypothetical universalism popularized by Moise Amyraut. This is the opinion of many modern scholars, including Duncan Fraser. (3) Other modern scholars argue the distinctive nature of Fraser's two-fold redemptive paradigm justifies it being handled separately. (4) More recently, Bell and T.F. Torrance have identified Fraser as an example of a theologian wrestling to loosen the restrictive parameters imposed by the Westminster paradigm. While Fraser failed to break free from Westminster hindrances, he took several important steps to re-establish an interpretation of Christ's redemption which is faithful to the Christocentric perspective delineated by Calvin.

2.3.1: Fraser the Arminian: The Influence of a Polemical Context on Interpretation

The publication of Fraser's most controversial work, *A Treatise on Justifying Faith* (1749), appeared during a time of great theological unrest and heightened sensitivity to all things 'Arminian.' The controversy surrounding the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, which culminated in several *Marrowmen* being removed from their pastoral charges as a result of their supposed 'Arminian' sympathies, preceded the publication of Fraser's treatise by only a few years.⁵⁹ Those who declared the

⁵⁸ When Fraser's thoughts on Christ's redemption were published in the mid-18th century, opponents referred to his theory as a "new mode of Arminianism." See, *Act*, 44.

⁵⁹ For a detailed examination of Fraser's relationship to the Marrow Controversy, see, Lachman, D. C., *The Marrow Controversy 1718-1723: An Historical and Theological Analysis* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1988), 86-101. Lachman argues Fraser influenced Boston, and though Boston ultimately rejected Fraser's universalist terminology, these two men's doctrines of redemption were very similar. Boston, like Fraser, believed Christ was given as a covenant for all people and that Christ's redemption must be particularized prior to being efficacious for any. See, Boston, T., *The Beauties of Thomas Boston: A Selection of His Writings* Edit. by S. M'Millan. (Inverness: Christian Focus Publications, 1979), 567 and 593 and Boston, T., *An Explication of the Assembly's Shorter*

Marrowmen guilty of ‘Arminian’ heresy did so in light of their supposed commitment to the doctrine of universal redemption, despite their explicit statements to the contrary. The *Marrow Controversy* exposed the insecurities regarding the perceived threat of Arminianism. It was common for the Reformed establishment to ostracize anyone suspected of Arminianism unless he could indisputably prove his innocence.

Fraser’s *Treatise on Justifying Faith* was first widely circulated within this highly sensitive context. His treatise, which explicitly stated Christ’s redemption “hath a larger Sphere than Election hath,” was condemned immediately by the Reformed majority.⁶⁰ The Reformed churches were so fearful of Arminianism that an objective interpretation of Fraser’s argument was almost impossible, and his choice of terminology sealed his fate among 18th century interpreters.⁶¹ They took one look at his argument for a universal covenant of grace and the universal work of redemption and identified it as Arminian universalism.

Adam Gib was Fraser’s chief 18th century critic, describing Fraser’s *Treatise on Justifying Faith* as “a Scheme of gross and dangerous Errors.”⁶² He charged Fraser with leading the church into “the old Mire of *conditional Redemption* and the *Free-will*,” declaring “the new Horrors” advocated in Fraser’s treatise were nothing more than “the *Arminian* Point of *universal Redemption*...in somewhat of a new Dress.”⁶³

Catechism, Marrow of Modern Divinity With Notes, and Christ's Everlasting Espousals Vol. VII, S. M'Millan. The Whole Works of the Late Reverend Thomas Boston of Ettrick (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1850), 266. Additionally, Boston shared Fraser’s concern that assurance be located in the direct act of faith, rather than relegated to the reflex act of faith. See, 257-258 and 363.

⁶⁰ *JF*, 195. Thomas Mair was the most well-known defendant of Fraser’s orthodoxy, but Umpherston noted that Mr. Marshall also stood up for Fraser. See, Umpherston, C., *Observations on a Wolf in a Sheep-Skin*, 11-12.

⁶¹ *JF*, 71 and 147.

⁶² *Proceedings*, iii. Gib stood before the Associate Synod and urged his colleagues to recognize the “*imminent Danger*” that Fraser’s doctrine of redemption represented as a means of reviving the heresies of Arminianism. See, *Act*, 3-5. Gib might have been Fraser’s most recognized critic, but he certainly was not the only one to challenge the orthodoxy of Fraser’s teachings.

⁶³ *Act*, 48, 46, and 45. Gib convinced the other members of the Associate Synod of the dangers of Fraser’s doctrine of redemption. Consequently, Thomas Mair, who was the principal proponent of Fraser’s theology and who was credited with reprinting Fraser’s *Treatise on Justifying Faith*, was deposed in 1754 for teaching Fraser’s version of Arminian universalism, despite his emphatic claims to the contrary. See, *Case*, 15, wherein Mair declares his “Abhorrence of all *Arminian* Tenets and Doctrines.” However, unlike the *Marrowmen* who were cleared of the charge of teaching

Throughout his extensive critique of Fraser's doctrine of redemption, Gib noted there were several elements of Fraser's theory that did not match traditional Arminianism such as Fraser's inclusion of both the salvation of the elect and the gospel wrath of the reprobate. Though he also understood Fraser had maintained an orthodox position on the absolute nature of God's decrees. Gib continued to condemn Fraser's works as 'Arminian.'

In his analysis of Fraser, Gib often overextended his evidence to prove the flagrancy of Fraser's espousal of Arminian universalism, such as his erroneous assertion Fraser taught "free-will" and "conditional redemption."⁶⁴ Gib also ignored Fraser's motivation for writing and the polemical context in which he wrote. He failed to take seriously Fraser's stated objective to defend the absolute nature of God's decrees and Christ's redemption. Fraser was in fact trying to overthrow the doctrine of conditional redemption, while Gib claimed he intended the opposite.

Gib's conclusion that Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption was merely "a new Mode of Arminianism" was unjustified.⁶⁵ As most modern scholars would accept, Gib's interpretation reflected the pressure he felt within his own polemical context, rather than the evidence gathered from Fraser's argument. Gib's stance was driven by fear and he fixed upon the extent of Christ's redemption as the sole criterion by which the orthodoxy of a doctrine of redemption should be judged. Despite its shortcomings, this remains the dominant method used in the modern Calvin versus the Calvinists debates. This thesis exposes the limitations of a single-criterion method and encourages scholars to broaden the parameters of the current debate.

2.3.2: *Fraser the Amyraldian: The Recognition of a Via Media*

The majority of modern scholars prefer to identify Fraser's doctrine of Christ's redemption with the hypothetical universalism which rose to its greatest prominence through the teachings of the French theologian, Moise Amyraut. The

Arminianism eventually and were reinstated to their ministerial charges, Mair petitioned for restoration in 1766 and was denied because he would not renounce his allegiance to 'Arminianism.'

⁶⁴ Fraser opposed the "free will" approach taken by the "Arminians and Papists." See, *JF*, 32. According to Fraser, the free will approach to securing salvation undercut the sovereignty of God's grace as well as the hope for assurance by leaving salvation in the hands of such uncertainty. See, *JFSF*, 262.

⁶⁵ *Proceedings*, iii.

theory of hypothetical universalism, commonly referred to as ‘Amyraldianism,’ did not originate with Amyraut, but with the Scottish theologian, John Cameron, who developed the middle way often associated with Amyraldianism, with his introduction of an historical sequence to redemption located in the divine decree.⁶⁶ Those who draw a connection between Fraser’s and Amyraut’s theory of redemption do so on the basis both men affirmed all sinners were included in the scope of Christ’s redemption and conceded only the elect, chosen by God’s sovereign decree, would ultimately benefit from the saving sufficiency of Christ’s work.⁶⁷ In other words, they both recognized two consequences from Christ’s redemption, with benefits *all* sinners enjoyed and special benefits for the *elect*. On the basis that both Amyraut and Fraser held to a two-fold implication of Christ’s redemption, scholars often assume that their *viae media* are identical.⁶⁸ When discussing his doctrine of universal redemption, Fraser also noted those at Saumur and several other divines who support the broader scope of Christ’s redemption. Fraser’s acknowledgement of these men, however, should not be interpreted as an affirmation of any particular paradigm; rather, Fraser simply illustrates his point that there are other Reformed theologians who include an element of universality in the doctrine of redemption.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ *CAH*, 57. See also, *TIC*, 182; Nicole, R., "Moyse Amyraut (1596-1644) and the Controversy on Universal Grace, First Phase (1634-1637)" (Ph.D., Harvard University, 1966), 32; Strehle, *The Extent*, 345-346; Van Stam, *The Controversy*, 29.

⁶⁷ John Davenant, James Ussher, Richard Baxter, and John Testard and later Thomas Erskine and John McLeod Campbell are just a few of the other theologians who espoused a *via media* of redemption and who are commonly associated with Amyraldianism. See, Muller, R. A., *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15.

⁶⁸ Fraser explained that even though he conceived of Christ’s redemption in universal terms, he did not consider himself an “Adversary to such as are for a particular Redemption of the Elect only,” but he did state his opposition to those “who maintain the universal equal Extent of Christ’s Death.” In light of qualifications like these, which are prevalent throughout Fraser’s writings, this thesis argues that Fraser is better considered an advocate of a middle way between Amyraldianism and Westminsterian particularism, creating a *via media alia*. He echoed the emphasis of Amyraut regarding the broader scope of Christ’s redemption, but also held firm to the absolute nature of Christ’s redemption, which was so fundamental to Westminsterian particularism. See, *JF*, 216-217. Fraser taught that Christ redeemed all mankind, but this redemption purchased two things absolutely, (a) salvation for the elect and (b) gospel-wrath for the reprobate. Fraser explained that “Gospel Wrath” is an accidental or secondary aim in Christ’s redemption. Christ’s chief concern in redemption is the salvation of the elect. See, *JF*, 82-83. See also, Section 1.5.3 of this thesis regarding Fraser’s employment of Gospel Wrath as a particularizing influence on his universal.

⁶⁹ *JF*, 251.

Duncan Fraser has been the most significant modern scholar to equate Fraser's doctrine of redemption with Amyraut's hypothetical universalism.⁷⁰ He is the only other person to dedicate the whole of his doctoral research to examining the theology of James Fraser of Brea.⁷¹ In his thesis, D. Fraser concludes Fraser of Brea knew and approved of Amyraut's theories.⁷²

Some of D. Fraser's conclusions need to be reconsidered. He asserts Fraser of Brea discovered his version of hypothetical universalism through the influence of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*.⁷³ Arguing that *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* "possesses a considerable amount of material which justifies the theory of universal redemption," and it was this element, latent within the *The Marrow*, which Fraser of Brea adopted.⁷⁴ The suggestion the theory of redemption outlined in *The Marrow* might agree with the doctrine of universal redemption or any form of hypothetical universalism, runs contrary to the deductions of modern scholars of *The Marrow*.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Duncan Fraser provided his readers an overview of Fraser of Brea's doctrine of redemption. Relying heavily on quotations from the primary sources, Duncan Fraser noted the evidence of universal redemption throughout Fraser of Brea's writings. He successfully represented Fraser of Brea's doctrine of redemption in its historical and polemical contexts and precisely defined Fraser of Brea's dates and the developments following the publications of his works. Along with these strengths, however, there are also several shortcomings. Duncan Fraser failed to interact with Amyraut or any Amyraldian scholars in any significant way and largely overlooks the polemical nature of Fraser's interaction with Baxter. He briefly mentioned Fraser of Brea's disagreement with Baxter but equated it with his sympathies for some of the elements of Antinomianism. This is surprising, given that Fraser identifies the denunciation of Baxter's doctrine of redemption as one of his chief aims. Furthermore, D. Fraser relied heavily on extended quotations, and rarely provided sufficient analysis of Fraser's arguments.

⁷¹ Duncan Fraser's research has not been absorbed by many modern scholars, because it was misplaced for 38 years until I rediscovered his missing thesis.

⁷² *JFB*, 565. Fraser of Brea recognizes Saumur as a place where the broader scope of Christ's redemption is affirmed, but he never quotes Amyraut directly, claims his dependence on Amyraut, nor does he declare utter solidarity between his views and those of the professors at Saumur. Conversely, Fraser explicitly denounces the conditional redemption taught by Richard Baxter, which Baxter himself states is congruent with Amyraut's *via media*, a fact that Duncan Fraser and many other interpreters of Fraser's doctrine of redemption ignore.

⁷³ Duncan Fraser states, "For his theology in general Fraser was greatly indebted to the *Marrow*; but his universalism also had its roots there." *JFB*, 539.

⁷⁴ *JFB*, 544. D. Fraser recognizes that Boston and the other Marrowmen explicitly denied universal redemption, but he remarks that this was not a result of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*'s condemnation of it. See, 543.

⁷⁵ Andrew McGowan, recognizing Fraser of Brea was influenced by *The Marrow* and sharing D. Fraser's conclusion Fraser of Brea was an Amyraldian, however, strongly denies the credibility of equating *The Marrow*'s teaching with Amyraldian hypothetical universalism. McGowan, A. T. B., "The Federal Theology of Thomas Boston" (Ph.D., University of Aberdeen, 1990), 108.

This casts doubt upon the validity of his interpretation of Fraser's supposed brand of hypothetical universalism.

He is heavily dependent on secondary sources for an explanation of how Fraser's doctrine of redemption correlates to Amyraut's theory of hypothetical universalism. Although citing several of Amyraut's works in his bibliography, he does not appear to interact with Amyraut's theology or with modern scholars of Amyraut's theology.⁷⁶ His conclusions were largely based on the historical surveys of McCrie and Beaton who link Fraser of Brea's doctrine of redemption with Amyraut.⁷⁷

Michael Kitshoff also likened Fraser's and Amyraut's doctrine of redemption, stating Fraser shared Amyraut's goal "to find a golden means between two theories [Arminianism and particularism] neither of which was considered to do justice to the scriptural evidence and the nature of man."⁷⁸ He continued,

His [Fraser of Brea's] own beliefs that God, in some sense, wills and desires that all men should repent and be saved through Christ offered to the whole world, but that regenerating grace which follows upon election is not granted to all men, but only to the elect who on account of that attain salvation, seem to be fully in harmony with Amyraldism.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ The recent scholarship of Armstrong, Godfrey, Nicole, Strehle, and Van Stam has exposed the oversimplifications in many of D. Fraser's conclusions concerning Amyraut's *via media*. This thesis aims to demonstrate that D. Fraser also overlooked several of the essential aspects of Fraser of Brea's doctrine of redemption, key aspects to his forming accurate conclusions.

⁷⁷ Commenting on Fraser of Brea's doctrine of redemption, McCrie concluded that it "substantially reproduced the theory of the continental divine [Amyraut]." McCrie, C. G., *The Church of Scotland: Her Division and Her Reunions* (Edinburgh: Macniven & Wallace, 1901), 45-46. Similarly, Beaton summarized Fraser of Brea's thoughts as being "distinctly Amyraldian." Beaton, D. 'The "Marrow of Modern Divinity" and the Marrow Controversy' *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* I, (Edinburgh: 1926), 129.

⁷⁸ Kitshoff, M. C., "Aspects of Arminianism in Scotland" (M.Th., University of St. Andrews, 1967), 192. Kitshoff's term "golden means between two theories" refers to Amyraut's *via media*.

⁷⁹ Kitshoff, "Aspects," 193. Kitshoff fails to recognize that Fraser's idea of God 'willing' the salvation of all men through Christ's redemption was radically different than Amyraut's. Fraser's conception of the virtual will of God is particularly relevant to determining accurately the parameters of Fraser's understanding the universal aspects of Christ's redemption. See, Section 5.2.5 of this thesis.

Kitshoff went as far to declare, “What was called Amyraldism in the seventeenth century revived a century later in Scotland as Fraserism,” thus arguing Fraser was “fully in harmony with Amyraldianism.”⁸⁰

The supposed harmony between Fraser and Amyraut needs to be called into question because Kitshoff also affirmed Fraser’s commitment to the Standards produced by the Westminster Assembly. Kitshoff states, “The only way in which he [Fraser] differed markedly and remarkably from orthodox Calvinism was in his views on the extent of the atonement.”⁸¹ The implication of Kitshoff’s argument is that Amyraut’s theory of hypothetical universalism and Westminsterian particularism differ only with reference to the extent of Christ’s redemption. This was not the case since the separation between hypothetical universalism and Calvinistic orthodoxy in the 17th century was much greater and more fundamental than the extent of Christ’s redemption. The disagreements between these two parties touch the core of why Christ came and what he secured in his work of redemption.

Consequently, when Kitshoff equated Fraser’s and Amyraut’s doctrine of Christ’s redemption while also noting Fraser’s indebtedness to men like Dickson, Durham, and Rutherford, he introduces an element of inconsistency in his argument. Fraser cannot be a faithful hypothetical universalist while also being thoroughly committed to Westminsterian Calvinism; the two were fundamentally antithetical. This thesis aims to clarify Fraser’s relationship to both Amyraut and Westminster.

Baxter is often identified as one of Fraser’s theological opponents, but his impact on Fraser’s understanding of Christ’s redemption has been marginalized. When attempting to determine whether or not Fraser can accurately be labeled as an ‘Amyraldian,’ his disputes with Baxter are of critical importance, given the fact that Baxter identified his view on Christ’s conditional redemption with Cameron’s and Amyraut’s doctrine of hypothetical universalism.⁸²

⁸⁰ Kitshoff, “Aspects,” 216. Kitshoff states that, “Although Fraser felt that he could not fully agree with Cameron’s proposition, *Christus pro te mortuus est si tu id credas*, he approved of the mediatory views of the professors of Saumur.” However, Kitshoff fails to recognize that to exclude Cameron’s notion of conditional redemption is to destroy “the mediatory views of the professors of Saumur.” Kitshoff, “Aspects,” 193. See also, *JF*, 162 and 175.

⁸¹ Kitshoff, “Aspects,” 183.

⁸² Baxter wrote a letter to a friend stating, “The middle way which Camero [Cameron], Ludov, Crocius, Amyraldus, <John> Davenant, &c. go, I think, is nearest the Truth.” See, Keeble, *Calendar*, I.53. Baxter mentioned Ludevius Molinaeus wrote against him “for approving of Camero and Amiraldu’s way about universal Redemption and Grace.” See, R. Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae: Or,*

2.3.3: Fraser the Orthodox: The Validation of a Particularist Paradigm

Despite the attempt by many of Fraser's interpreters to force his doctrine of redemption into the categories of Arminianism or hypothetical universalism, it did not fit neatly into either. It was complex, somewhat confusing, and at times appears to be contradictory.

Several scholars recognize the uniqueness of Fraser's doctrine of redemption and do not immediately stereotype him as an Arminian or hypothetical universalist. John MacLeod identifies Fraser's doctrine of redemption as "a peculiar kind," which nuanced Reformed orthodoxy's understanding of covenant theology and the scope of God's decree to redeem, but did not introduce the conditionality that was despised by particularists and which predominated in hypothetical universalism and Arminianism.⁸³ MacLeod maintains the 'peculiar' nature of Fraser's doctrine of

Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times (London: Matthew Sylvester, 1696), I.110. Furthermore, Baxter appealed to Cameron to validate his understanding that God's will of purpose was indeed conditional and not absolute. See, Baxter, R. *Aphorismes of Justification* (London: 1649), 4-5. The conditionality that is so essential to Baxterianism also forms the heart of Amyraut's doctrine of redemption. McGrath comments, "The importance of John Cameron and Moses Amyraut in Baxter's theology of predestination and the nature of faith cannot be forgotten. From Amyraut, Baxter taught that the divine will was sovereign, but the covenant was also conditional: faith was required...the mid seventeenth century the pertinent issues of covenant condition and the nature of covenant righteousness had changed the parameters of covenant theology." See, McGrath, *Puritans*, 174. Van Stem explains that it is not Amyraut's claim that Christ's redemption is universal or his insistence that there is a dualistic element in Christ's redemption, but the presence of a hypothetical element which is most defining characteristic of Amyrastianism. He clarifies, "The term 'les hypothetiques' was a reference to the problem in Amyraut's theology that on the one hand it declared that God willed to save all and on the other hand it acknowledged that this is not realized in all. Amyraut's intent was to make plain that whoever believes may rest assured that God will save him or her and has in fact elected that person. But his opponents objected that he made God's will to save all people 'frustratoire.' It was a reduction to absurdity of a small part of Amyraut's total point of view and the expression 'hypothetical universalism' is therefore ill-suited to serve as a summary of the core of Amyraut's theology." See, Van Stem, *The Controversy*, 277.

⁸³ Macleod, *Scottish Theology*, 174. The understanding of conditionality differs between Arminians and hypothetical universalism. Arminians understood conditionality in terms of man's responsibility either to accept or reject Christ's redemption. According to the Arminians, Christ was given absolutely for all, but only to establish the possibility of salvation. Therefore, the efficacy of Christ's redemption is ultimately conditioned on whether or not a person chooses to embrace or reject Christ's office. Therefore, it is a theoretical possibility for Arminianism that Christ's redemption might not have saved anyone depending on how individuals respond. See, *WA*, II.60-64. Hypothetical universalism's form of conditionality was much more subtle than that of Arminianism by shrouding its conditionality in Calvinistic vestiges. Amyraut maintained that God sovereignly elects, but only subsequent to his sending Christ as a hypothetical Savior of the world. Accordingly, Amyraut includes an element of conditionality as a result of his understanding of the sequential development of God's decrees to save. God first determines to save everyone through his universal provision, but seeing that no one would be able to make use of this provision, Amyraut introduces the subordinate decree of election. Therefore, unlike Arminianism, hypothetical universalists locate the presence of condition in

redemption related to Fraser's two-fold aim in redemption. He summarizes the two-fold theory of Christ's redemption, "All were held to be redeemed, the vessels of mercy to be vessels of mercy, and the vessels of wrath to have in their cup the special ingredient of what was called Gospel Wrath and Gospel Vengeance."⁸⁴ Fraser's notion of evangelical or redemptive wrath related to Christ's words of warning to Capernaum and the other cities which rejected the gospel (Mark 10:15; 11:23-24). Fraser declared, "This is that which shall torment Folk most in Hell; the Cry of the Blood of Christ which was shed for them."⁸⁵ Despite the presence of the double-design of Christ's redemption, MacLeod judges Fraser to be fundamentally orthodox.

Like MacLeod, David Lachman is another scholar who defends Fraser's orthodoxy, despite the uniqueness of Fraser's two-fold redemptive formulation. First, Lachman acknowledges that Fraser himself admitted to deviating from the accepted Reformed position when teaching "that unregenerate persons have particular right to the promises of the gospel *before* closing with Christ by faith and, also, in regard to the extent of Christ's death."⁸⁶ Next, Lachman outlines the various options for the Reformed way of expressing the doctrine of redemption, and in so doing validated Fraser's expressly stated claim his doctrine of redemption differed from the traditional particularist formulation "more in Appearance, than Reality."⁸⁷ He points out that although Fraser incorporated a two-fold design in his doctrine of redemption that it was inaccurate to conclude he agreed with either the Arminian or hypothetical universalist position. Lachman concluded,

Fraser has the same object in view as those who are for a particular redemption of the elect only and is only employing a diverse method against the common enemy (Arminians, Papists and other adversaries

the decrees of God rather than the choices of man. See, Amyraut, M., *Brief Traitte De La Predestination Et De Ses Principales Dependances* (Saumur: Iean Lesnier & Issac Desbordes, 1634), 74-79. Fraser objected to this notion of God's ordaining the means prior to ordaining the end. According to Fraser, the means and the scope of that means, namely Christ's universal redemption, were ordained to specific ends, both for the elect and the reprobate. For a fuller analysis of Arminianism and hypothetical universalism, see, Sections 2.6 and 3.3 of this thesis.

⁸⁴ Macleod, *Scottish Theology*, 174.

⁸⁵ *JF*, 204.

⁸⁶ *Marrow*, 92-93.

⁸⁷ *JF*, 7. See also, *Marrow*, 93.

of the grace of God) who maintain the universal equal extent of Christ's death.⁸⁸

Lachman's judgment was based on his observation that Fraser taught, along with his Westminsterian contemporaries, that Christ's redemption was absolute. Lachman struggled to perceive the advantage of Fraser's two-fold doctrine of redemption, but was unwilling to banish it from the realm of Reformed orthodoxy.⁸⁹

The question raised as a consequence of the insights of MacLeod and Lachman is whether Fraser's insistence on broadening the scope of Christ's redemption fundamentally inhibited his ability to remain within the framework of Reformed orthodoxy. Fraser himself believed he could remain within this framework, but his contemporaries determined he could not. This thesis will clarify the correlation between Fraser's two-fold concept of Christ's redemption and his broader theological framework to judge whether or not Fraser's claim to Reformed orthodoxy was justified.

2.3.4: Fraser the Anti-Westminsterian: A Re-evaluation of Redemption within the Modern Debate

Whereas MacLeod and Lachman emphasized Fraser's fundamental agreement with his Westminsterian contemporaries, Bell and T.F. Torrance stressed Fraser's divergence from his Reformed contemporaries, which they considered a positive move. Bell and Torrance both identify Fraser as an anomaly in 17th century federalism and attempt to represent him as one who held loosely to the particularism.⁹⁰ Bell and Torrance represent a group within modern post-Reformation scholarship who contest Westminster's claims to be the legitimate successors of Calvinist orthodoxy.⁹¹ According to these theologians, Fraser was a

⁸⁸ Marrow, 94.

⁸⁹ Marrow, 95.

⁹⁰ Bell, M. C., *Calvin and Scottish Theology, The Doctrine of Assurance* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1985), 138-142 and Torrance, T. F., *Scottish Theology From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 182-201. Particularists believe that their notion of the absolute efficacy of Christ's redemption was firmly rooted in Calvin's understanding that Christ's redemption brings life, not merely the possibility thereof. See, Calvin, J., *Calvin's Catechisme* (Aberdene: Edward Raban, 1628), 87.

⁹¹ The two areas of Westminsterian theology which are most often challenged by its opponents are (a) the covenant of works and (b) the limited extent of Christ's redemption. For example, Rolston rejected the inclusion of the covenant of works under the assumption that it would necessarily corrupt a biblical understanding of the covenant of grace. He charged Westminster with imposing a federal

moderate figure in Scottish theological history, trapped in the shackles of Westminsterian federalism and desperate to break free to return to the more Christocentric and gracious theology of Calvin.⁹²

Fraser has become a pawn in their efforts to pit Calvin against the Westminsterian Calvinists.⁹³ They argue Fraser demonstrated some of the ways in

structure on Calvin without warrant. See, Rolston, H., *John Calvin Versus the Westminster Confession* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1972), 21-23. J.B. Torrance, like Rolston, objects to the federal framework of Westminsterian theology based on the conclusion that it introduces a legalism into the covenant of grace. He accused Westminster of creating a new form of legalism, which was incongruent with the free promise of God manifested in Christ. See, Torrance, J. B., "Covenant or Contract? A Study of the Theological Background of Worship in Seventeenth-Century Scotland," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970): 51-76. Furthermore, J.B. Torrance also opposed the commonly held Westminster position that all of God's dealings with mankind are simply the outworking of his double decree of election and reprobation, which logically formed the foundation of the doctrine of particular redemption. J.B. Torrance argues that this view unjustifiably truncates the grace of God and encourages greater self-reliance based on the need to demonstrate the true fruits of election. See, Torrance, J.B. "Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology" *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today* Heron, A. I. C. (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1982), 40-54. Jinkins contends that the post-Reformation particularists built their theology around the concept of God as a law giver, the result of which, he maintains, elevated justice above all other divine attributes and made God's love of the elect arbitrary. See, Jinkins, *Atonement*, x-xi. Roxburgh identifies Fraser as a theologian struggling to free himself from the "strait jacket" of 17th century federalism. See, Roxburgh, K. B. E., "Theological Issues Arising from the 'Marrow of Modern Divinity' Controversy and Their Influence on the Doctrine of Assurance of Salvation" (M.Th., University of Aberdeen, 89), 230.

⁹² Despite the fact that Reformed theology is broader than Calvin, it is not simply the modern theologians who seek to claim Calvin in order to substantiate the orthodoxy of their position. Fraser certainly appealed to Calvin and the early Reformers to corroborate the accuracy of his proposals. See, *JF*, 33 and *JFSF*, 53 and 63. Amyraut laid claim to Calvin. He contended that his rejection of Beza's supralapsarian paradigm was merely his attempt to return to Calvin's more gracious and less rigid system. See, Amyraut, M., *Defense De La Doctrine De Calvin Sur Le Sujet De L'Election Et De La Reprobation* (Saumur: 1644) .

⁹³ The deviation from Calvin, according to anti-Westminsterian theologians, began with Beza. R.T. Kendall argues that as a result of embracing 'Bezan' Calvinism, the Reformed church was led further away from the Christocentricity of Calvin towards a much more speculative and scholastic doctrine of redemption. The scholastic paradigm culminated in the standards produced by the Westminster Assembly. See, *CEC*, 209-210. Helm responds to Kendall's thesis by defending Westminster's interpretation of Christ's redemption. He maintains that the Divines were both Christocentric and faithful to Calvin when they advanced the limited scope and absolute efficacy of Christ's redemption. One of Kendall's fundamental arguments against limiting Christ's redemption to the elect is the assumption that this will necessarily lead to a separation of faith and assurance. This separation forces an individual to be overly introspective and to approach the Christian life in terms of adherence to a legalistic system, wherein assurance is reserved for only the most holy. Helm denies the legitimacy of Kendall's argument and maintains that the Westminsterian notion of redemption is not only faithful to Calvin but also fosters a greater sense of assurance. He states that by faith sinners can gain a confidence that Christ's work is efficacious and complete. He affirms that assurance should accompany faith, not because the individual is able to discern the secret purposes of God, but because the gospel clearly presents Christ as open to all and utterly sufficient for the needs of all sinners. See, Helm, P., "Review: Calvin, English Calvinism and the Logic of Doctrinal Development," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 (1981): 179-185. Helm expands his critique of Kendall's thesis and his defense of Westminsterian theology. See, Helm, *Calvin*, 1-75.

which Westminster fundamentally altered the Christocentricity of Calvin's theological system.⁹⁴ Bell introduced Fraser as an example of a theologian trying to break free from the confines of Westminsterian federalism by advocating the broader extent of Christ's redemption.⁹⁵ Bell accepted Fraser's evolution was only partial and therefore necessarily involved contradictions, especially in relation to the attempt to defend the theory of God's absolute decree of election and reprobation.⁹⁶ Despite the lack of consistency, Bell identified Fraser as a necessary component on the theological and historical continuum of Reformed theologians attempting to find their way back to Calvin.

T.F. Torrance, like Bell, employs Fraser as an illustration of the 'already, not yet' transformation of Scottish Reformed Theology, a transformation in which theologians realized the failures of the Westminsterian federalism and returned to Calvin's Christocentric doctrine of redemption.⁹⁷ Although utilizing a covenantal

Perry Miller joins those who challenge the ability of Westminsterian federalism to retain the gracious nature of the Bible's description of the covenantal relationship between God and mankind. He assumes like many other anti-federalists that Westminster errs by defining God's covenant as a contract, which he claims is too rigid and legalistic, rather than defining God's covenant in terms of a promise or testimony, which is given without condition or stipulation. See, P. Miller, *Puritan New England: Essays on Religion, Society, and Culture* (1977), 51; Miller, P., *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 373, 375, 383-385; Miller, P., *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: 1956), 71. J. Von Rohr responds to Miller, challenging his understanding of the conditional nature of Westminsterian concepts of the covenant. Von Rohr explains that the presence of a condition did not necessarily imply a *quid pro quo* relationship between God and man given that God gracious and sovereignly supplied the means to fulfill the covenantal stipulations. Von Rohr accuses Miller and other anti-federalists, like Kendall, of ignoring this element of federalism, which is key for understanding the absolute nature of God's gracious dealings with his elect. See, Von Rohr, J., *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 16, 21, 32-33; Von Rohr, J., "Covenant and Assurance in Early English Puritanism," *Church History* 34 (1965): 199. See, Chapter V for a more detailed debate on the nature of God's covenant as it factors into Fraser's quest for assurance.

⁹⁴ *ST*, 185.

⁹⁵ *Assurance*, 142. Bell also attempted to show how Fraser distinguishes himself from his contemporaries when arguing for an unconditional covenant of grace, de-emphasizing the role of predestination, and stressing that assurance is the essence of faith. Bell's analysis of Fraser will be called into question on each of these points throughout the remainder of this thesis, specifically in Chapter V, where it will be argued that the Christocentricity of Fraser's doctrine of redemption complimented his strongly decretal soteriology.

⁹⁶ *Assurance*, 142.

⁹⁷ Both T.F. Torrance and Bell represent Westminster as a dark period in Scotland's theological history. They maintain that it is through the work of men like Fraser and the Marrowmen of the 18th century that Scotland slowly returned to its more historically Calvinistic roots. The culmination of this progressive restoration occurred in the emergence of the theological perspective of men like John McLeod Campbell. See, *Assurance*, 127-128 and *ST*, 182 and 190-191.

framework, Fraser was depicted as a figure who emerged from the legalism of Westminsterian federalism by promoting a much more “Cross-centered and Christ-centered” form of theology.⁹⁸ Such a commitment to Christocentricity, T.F. Torrance explained, compelled Fraser to extend the scope of Christ’s redemption to both the elect and the reprobate. Torrance praised Fraser for paving the way for future Reformed theologians and recognized Fraser’s doctrine of redemption as providing a “powerful biblically sustained argumentation for the sovereign act of divine forgiveness and the universal offer of salvation to all people without discrimination.”⁹⁹

Like Fraser’s 18th century interpreters, Bell and Torrance force him into a position with which he would have been uncomfortable. Fraser worked diligently to reveal the continuity of his doctrine of redemption with the fundamentals outlined in the Westminster Standards. Nevertheless, Torrance extracted Fraser’s argument from its intended context to fit Fraser into his own agenda. Torrance asserted, “He [Fraser] was certainly at odds with the prevailing interpretation of the covenant of grace in contractual terms,” but he failed to recognize Fraser’s objection was aimed at Baxterianism, not Westminsterian federalism. Torrance’s statement that Fraser taught Christ’s redemption brought “unconditional and absolute salvation” for all humanity does not convey what Fraser intended by the unconditional and absolute nature of Christ’s redemption.¹⁰⁰ According to Fraser, Christ secured salvation for the elect alone. Bell’s and Torrance’s approach to interpreting Fraser’s doctrine of redemption reflected an agenda-driven methodology.

Bell and Torrance are not the only theologians who identify Fraser’s doctrine of redemption as an illustration of Fraser’s discontentedness with Westminsterian particularism. In his research on John MacLeod Campbell’s doctrine of redemption, Faris draws several parallels between Fraser and Campbell and cites Fraser as an example that others prior to McLeod Campbell questioned the continuity between Westminster and the early Reformers.¹⁰¹ Tuttle, who also studied McLeod

⁹⁸ *ST*, 182.

⁹⁹ *ST*, 202.

¹⁰⁰ *ST*, 184.

¹⁰¹ Faris, D. L., “The Nature of Theological Inquiry as Raised by the Conflict of the Teaching of McLeod Campbell and Westminster Theology” (Ph.D., University of Edinburgh, 1967), 279-282. McLeod Campbell’s doctrine of universal redemption was condemned, and he was deposed as a minister of the Church of Scotland in 1831. See, the Appendix to this thesis for a fuller investigation

Campbell's doctrine of redemption, highlights William McGill as a late 18th century theologian in the lineage of McLeod Campbell who adopted Fraser's perspective.¹⁰² Needham explains when Thomas Erskine began to depart from Westminsterian particularism he attached a significant portion of Fraser's argument to his book, *Introductory Essay to Extracts of Letters to a Christian Friend by a Lady*, as a means of gaining credibility for his thought.¹⁰³

2.4: Conclusion

The four conflicting ways of categorizing Fraser illustrate the challenge of correctly interpreting Fraser's doctrine of redemption. The continuing disagreement and unresolved questions surrounding Fraser's doctrine of redemption provide a justification for the full analysis undertaken in this thesis.

of the similarities and disparities between Fraser's and McLeod Campbell's doctrines of universal redemption.

¹⁰² Tuttle, G. M., *So Rich a Soil: John McLeod Campbell on Christian Atonement* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1986), 23.

¹⁰³ Needham, N. R., *Thomas Erskine of Linlathen: His Life and Theology, 1788-1837* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1990), 215-216.

CHAPTER III: DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION DURING THE REFORMATION PERIOD

3.1: Introduction

The Apostle Paul identified Christians as those who had been reconciled to God through the cross, and who had subsequently been entrusted with spreading the message of reconciliation to those who had not yet experienced the benefits of Christ's reconciliation.¹ The redemption of Christ, therefore, represents an essential aspect of both what it means to be a Christian and what it means to live faithfully as a follower of Christ. Theologians throughout the history of the church have sought to develop the doctrine of Christ's death in order to delineate both the benefits gained and the obligations commissioned. The doctrine of Christ's death is typically categorized under the heading of the doctrine of Christ's atonement or Christ's redemption.² When theologians speak of Christ's atonement, they are usually referring to Christ's work to resolve the problem of human sin. The term redemption relates to the freedom from sin's bondage that comes through Christ's death. For the purpose of this thesis, however, it will be accepted that atonement and redemption are complimentary and represent the idea that Christ's death was God's appointed

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. Reconciliation is a term that refers to the ultimate benefits of Christ's redemption, namely the restoration of the relationship between God and man by eliminating the barrier of sin (expiation and propitiation) and supplying the needed righteousness. For an explanation of how reconciliation relates to Christ's satisfaction, see, Heppe, H., *Reformed Dogmatics* E. Bizer, rev. and ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1950), 473ff.

² Terms including satisfaction, payment, and merit are also related to Christ's redemption, but are most often subcategories. The presence of the doctrine of the redemption presupposes the need to satisfy the vindicatory justice essential to God. See, Muller, R. A., *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, Ca. 1520 to Ca. 1725* 4 Vols., (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), III.492.

means for amending the sins committed by humankind and for providing at least the possibility of salvation.³

Christ's redemption not only results in the personal pardon of sin, but also creates, for those who have received these benefits, a responsibility to communicate the message of reconciliation to others. Theologians have struggled to define the content of the human offer because the clear parameters of Christ's redemption have proved somewhat elusive. Some theologians view the message of Christ's redemption as an open statement: 'Christ died for you.' Others argue that such a declaration is unwarranted, believing this statement communicates something of God's divine and secret purpose, rather than simply issuing a general promise of Christ's sufficiency. Consequently, debates have arisen throughout the centuries regarding how Christians can fulfill their obligation to preach the gospel of reconciliation while at the same time remain faithful to the content of that message. This chapter and the next will explore how theologians in the 16th and 17th centuries sought to resolve the tension surrounding the doctrines relating to Christ's death, and thus, how their various doctrines of redemption impacted their understanding of how best to present Christ crucified.

Since this thesis seeks to determine James Fraser of Brea's motivation for articulating his doctrine of Christ's redemption, these two chapters will supply a broader theological context against which Fraser's doctrine can be evaluated. The analysis will include a selective summary of several key developments in the doctrine of redemption, which had influence on Fraser's theory.⁴ It is beyond the scope of these chapters to provide an exhaustive description of these developments or to detail meticulously how each of the theologians, or groups of theologians, related to one another or how their entire theologies compare. Sufficient attention will be given to the evolution of the doctrine of redemption and the interconnection

³ Depending on the theologian, Christ's redemption generally functioned as the cause of salvation or an attempt to reposition humanity for the possibility of salvation.

⁴ It is understood that many of the theologians of the Reformation and post-Reformation periods were heavily dependent on Patristic and Medieval Scholastic theologians for their opinions on the doctrine of redemption. These links are recognized, but spending the time to trace the heritage of each of these ideas through the early church fathers is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, Duncan's analysis of covenant theology in the Patristic period is helpful and has provided insight into the issues addressed in this thesis. See, Duncan, J. L., "The Covenant Idea in Ante-Nicene Theology" (Ph.D., University of Edinburgh, 1995).

of the theologians as they contribute to the key features in Fraser's perspective on Christ's redemption.

The theologians who have been examined have been chosen, first and foremost, because Fraser recognized them as significant contributors to his theology of Christ's redemption.⁵ They have been loosely arranged in chronological order as a means of appreciating the complexities and the interdependence of their theologies. These theologians represent a sufficiently broad spectrum, both historically and theologically, in order to reconstruct the context out of which Fraser developed his doctrine of redemption. Understandably, some of the theologians selected correspond to those individuals with whom Fraser desired to be associated.⁶ Others, according to Fraser, espoused theories of Christ's redemption with which he wished to be totally disassociated, namely, Arminius and Baxter.⁷

It is imperative to take a step back from the stereotypical characterizations of each of these theologians in order to develop a true picture of what is essential in their doctrines of redemption. Unfortunately, the continuities and discontinuities among the various theories are commonly exaggerated, and as a result, what was a

⁵ The exceptions to this rule are Anselm, Abelard, and Amyraut. Fraser never explicitly cites his agreement or disagreement with Amyraut. Nevertheless, there is plenty of justification for choosing Amyraut as a contextualizing figure in Fraser's doctrine of redemption. He interacted directly with Cameron, Amyraut's mentor. He also identified Saumur as a place where universal redemption was taught. Modern scholars most often associate Fraser's doctrine of redemption with Amyraldianism. Additionally, Fraser focused much of his writings at refuting the neonomianism of Richard Baxter, who embraced many of Amyraut's foundational presuppositions.

⁶ Thomas Shepherd was a theologian to whom Fraser regularly referred, though he has not been selected as one of the key figures in this chapter. Fraser did appeal to Shepherd as a means of arguing that "Christ bought the whole world to himself." See, *JF*, 205 and 213. However, many of Fraser's appeals to Shepherd relate to the way Shepherd understood the nature and act of justifying faith. See, *JFSF*, 19, 40, 197, 203ff. Fraser's arguments in support of Shepherd's doctrine of justifying faith were later published separately. See, Fraser, J. *A Vindication of Mr. Thomas Shepherd His sincere Convert & sound Believer from the aspersions of Mr. Giles Firmin in his book intituled The Real Christian* (N.D.).

⁷ Fraser also wrote in opposition to Roman Catholicism and Quakerism. Fraser grouped Catholicism with Arminianism and Baxterianism under the banner of those who taught a conditional covenant of grace, which Fraser concluded ultimately undermined grace altogether. See, *JF*, 32, 160, 181. Fraser also objected to Catholicism based on its denial of the causal and unbreakable link between the redemption of the elect and salvation. In addition to Catholicism, Fraser also denounced the Quakers for their agreement with both the Arminians and Catholicism who assumed that Christ died only to provide a general sufficient grace, which would enable a sinner to turn to Christ in his own strength. See, *JFSF*, 261. Having been formerly associated with the Quakers during his time studying in Edinburgh, some historians suggest that Fraser developed his thoughts on universal redemption in accordance with the Quaker's universalism. See, King, *The Covenanters*, 376. If, however, Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption grew out of his time spent with the Quakers, he quickly disassociated himself from their notion of the general reference theory of Christ's redemption.

seemingly minor correlation can grow to be regarded as an inextricable link, and what was a subtle distinction often can be viewed as a radical departure. A less careful analysis will invariably lead to misinterpretation, which is precisely what has occurred, as most historians and theologians have taken a cursory glance at Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption. Agreements and differences between these theologians' doctrines of redemption are certainly evident, yet the complexity of each theologian's arguments should not be missed. These chapters will clarify the proper lines of demarcation and determine how strongly to stress those differences.

One widespread assumption among the historians and theologians who have written concerning the doctrine of redemption in the 16th and 17th centuries is the notion that a theologian's view on the extent of Christ's death is the fundamental and defining characteristic by which his doctrine of redemption ought to be classified. Theologians are assumed to fall into one of two categories: redemptive particularism or redemptive universalism. However, such a limited categorization is inaccurate, and such a one-dimensional approach to the doctrine of redemption is wholly inadequate. By taking a more comprehensive approach to the doctrine of redemption, one is better equipped to evaluate developments in the complex doctrine of redemption, as well as to analyze the legitimacy of Fraser's claims to have been in complete agreement with particularists, like Rutherford and Durham, while still advancing a doctrine of universal redemption.⁸ Additionally, it will be possible to begin to determine whether Fraser's contemporaries were justified in referring to him as an Arminian and whether modern critics are warranted in referring to him as an advocate of hypothetical universalism.⁹

The pervasive tendency among historians and theologians of the 16th and 17th centuries to confine the categories of redemption to either redemptive particularism or redemptive universalism is a failure to recognize that the extent of Christ's redemption is only properly understood as a subcategory of an individual's theology of redemption. A theologian's convictions regarding the extent of Christ's redemption were not necessarily an indication of his fundamental presuppositions.

⁸ *JF*, 252.

⁹ Adam Gib emphatically denounced Fraser's treatises on the basis that he understood them to advocate explicitly the Arminian view of universal redemption. See, Gib, A., *The Present Truth: A Display of the Secession-Testimony; in the Three Periods of the Rise, State, and Maintenance of That Testimony* II, (Edinburgh: R. Fleming and A. Neil, 1774), 131.

Accordingly, when the extent of Christ's redemption is addressed, the discussion should also include other key elements of an individual's theology.

The following discussion will take the extent of Christ's redemption into consideration and will also examine the other significant factors in the development of the theology of redemption. These include: how one understands the relationship between Christ's person and his role as Mediator; how and to whom the death of Christ is applied; what the precise benefits of Christ's death were; and how these related to salvation. Of all the important developments in the doctrine of redemption during the Reformation and Post-Reformation periods, however, one feature takes prominence. An individual's theology of redemption is principally defined according to how theologians interpret God's decretive purpose for Christ's death, so that, even the extent of the redemption, whether limited or universal, submits to God's will. Each of these factors played a valuable role in the development of the doctrine of redemption, and each must be examined as we seek to grasp the context out of which Fraser's doctrine of redemption emerged.

For the sake of comprehensibility, the survey of key developments in the doctrine of redemption has been divided into two chapters. This chapter will analyze the theories of several theologians from the Reformation period. Chapter IV will continue this assessment by investigating theologians of the post-Reformation period who directly or indirectly influenced Fraser's doctrine of redemption.

3.2: Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Martin Luther is generally heralded as the father of the Protestant Reformation. His ninety-five theses challenged the Roman Catholic Church to answer for its abuses. Luther recognized that the church was more concerned with securing money to finance papal wars than it was with conveying forgiveness to troubled consciences.¹⁰ He was not content to allow Rome's theological neglect to continue. Luther had discovered a freedom in Christ's provision of righteousness and was desperate for others to experience the liberty that Christ's redemption brought him. According to Luther, Christ's redemption meant the end of the law of sin and death and introduced the hope of justification by faith alone, based on Christ's righteousness alone. Luther

¹⁰ See, Lohse, B., *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 9. For a broader discussion of Luther's existential struggles in the faith and the development of his theology, see, Steinmetz, D. C., *Luther in Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 1-11.

summarized this gospel motif in terms of our “happy exchange.”¹¹ He contrasted the sinner’s miserable condition with the good news of God’s provision in Christ, writing,

God hath set forth as it were a certaine glass unto all sinners, wherein they may see that he would be borne of the posterity of sinners, that the greater sinners we be, so much more certaine and greater refuge we might have to so gracious a God, Priest, and King, who is our brother, in whom only and in none other we are able to fulfill the law, and obtaine the grace of God.¹²

Luther’s writings testify to his conviction that Christ’s redemption and the abolition of the law extended to all humanity. There is little debate, therefore, among Lutheran scholars that the great Reformer taught anything other than an unashamed universal redemption.¹³ In his last will and confession, Luther proclaimed concerning Christ’s redemption that “god hath layd the iniquyte of al man kind upon his back.”¹⁴ Additionally, in his commentary on the book of Galatians, he declared that Christ was innocent as the unblemished Lamb of God, “But because he bears the sins of the world, his innocence is pressed down with the sins and guilt of the entire world.”¹⁵ Luther’s understanding of the doctrine of redemption originates from the fact that Christ humbled himself to be under the law and subsequently so perfectly satisfied the demands of the law that all sinners who are also under the law could not help but benefit from his deliverance.¹⁶

¹¹ Lohse, B., *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* Trans and Edit by R.A. Harrisville. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 225.

¹² Luther, M., *Thirtie Foure Special and Chosen Sermons of Dr. Martin Luthers* Trans. by W. Gace. (London: Tho. Paine, 1649), 32.

¹³ Mueller highlights Luther’s stance on the *gratia universalis in Christo*, claiming that it was an illustration of Luther’s attempt to take God’s desire to save all humankind seriously. See, Mueller, J. T., “A Survey of Luther’s Theology: Part 1,” *BSac* 113 (1956): 153-154. See also, Althaus, P., *The Theology of Martin Luther* Trans. by R.C. Schultz. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1966), 201-223.

¹⁴ M. Luther, “The Last Will and Confession of Martyn Luthers Faith,” (1543), preface.

¹⁵ Luther, M., *Lectures on Galatians 1535, Chapters 1-4* J. Pelikan. Luther’s Works (26) (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 3:13.

¹⁶ Despite the universalism present in Luther’s doctrine of redemption, he identified the link between Christ’s efforts to redeem sinners and the work of the Holy Spirit who adopts. See, Luther, *Comm. on Galatians*, 445-446.

Luther's interpretation of Christ's redemption represented a synthesis of the ideas of Anselm's satisfaction theory and Abelard's notion of *Christus Victor*.¹⁷ Christ, being the person who both satisfies the wrath of God and achieves the victory over sin and death, formed the foundation upon which Luther builds his radical distinction between law and gospel. It is also the basis upon which Luther articulates the two-fold nature of redemption. According to Luther, Christ stood as the federal representative of all humankind when he was crucified on the cross. This universal representation and redemption, however, was limited. It was not limited in its extent, but in its purpose. In other words, this universal redemption was merely a 'legal' redemption, meaning that Christ redeemed humanity from the obligation and curse of the law.¹⁸ However, benefits of this legal redemption were communicated by the application of Christ's blood by faith. Luther defined faith as the means by which a sinner is actually sprinkled with Christ's blood.¹⁹ Consequently, Luther created a dualism between the legal benefits of Christ's redemption and the actual salvific benefits of Christ's redemption.

This first and broader aspect of Christ's redemption, according to Luther, formed the basis whereby all sinners are warranted to believe the promises of God. Luther directed his readers to contemplate the benevolence of God's revealed will and to accept 'the charter' whereby a sinner's right to believe is established.²⁰ Luther maintained that faith was "grounded on the true promise of God made unto us in Christ."²¹ Faith was born in the heart of a sinner as the Holy Spirit transformed the individual, enabling him to embrace the trustworthiness of God's offer and the sufficiency of Christ's merit. Faith, therefore, was based on the testimony of Christ's universal redemption. Luther, however, did not understand universal redemption to

¹⁷ See, Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 226.

¹⁸ Luther generally only recognized the negative elements of the law. He understood that "The law was originally an expression of God's love; now it is the tool of his wrath." See, Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, 255. Calvin, on the other hand, acknowledged that even though Christ's reign destroyed the reign of the law, there remained a positive use of the law as the basis of knowing how to live the Christian life, commonly referred to as the third use of the law. See, Calvin, J., *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* XX and XXI, McNeill, J. T. The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), II.7.12.

¹⁹ Luther, M., *Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter* Trans. by H. Bertram. Luther's Works 30 (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), 7.

²⁰ Luther, M., *Fourteen Consolations* M.O. Dietrich. Luther's Works (42) (Philadelphia, PN: Fortress Press, 1969), 155-166.

²¹ Luther, *Thirtie Foure...Sermons*, 172.

imply that God's sole purpose in Christ's death was to make available a general provision which would hopefully persuade individuals to believe.

Luther's statements regarding the universal nature of Christ's redemption and God's revealed will must be understood in light of his convictions concerning the secret will of God. The secret will of God, according to Luther, took priority in the doctrine of redemption. This was not a priority of emphasis, but a priority of purpose. God's intentions for the redemption of Christ were two-fold. On the one hand, he desired to communicate to his readers that they had warrant to believe based on Christ's satisfaction of the law for the world. On the other hand, God decreed absolutely that Christ's blood would result in the salvation of certain individuals. This second aspect of Luther's doctrine of redemption exposes the fact that it was God's intention that Christ would be sufficient for all, but efficacious only for the elect. In other words, when God decreed Christ's redemption, he decreed both the universal satisfaction that provided the warrant to believe and the particular redemption of those who would be saved.²²

The efficaciousness of Christ's redemption to save some puts Luther's statements regarding the universal nature of Christ's death in the proper and more foundational context of God's purposeful redemption. Reflecting on the infinite worth of Christ's blood coupled with God's intention to save, Luther wrote,

This treasure is so costly and noble that the mind of reason of no man can comprehend it. Just one drop of this innocent blood would have been more than enough for the sin of the whole world. Yet the Father wanted to pour out His grace on us so abundantly and to spend so much that He let His Son Christ shed all His blood and gave us the entire treasure.²³

According to Luther, the price that Christ laid down, though of inestimable value, had a very particular design. Christ's aim was not to procure merely a ransom for the possibility of salvation. According to Luther, Christ redeemed so that sinners might

²² Scaer argues that Luther's perspective on God's electing purposes in Christ's redemption must be differentiated from that of Calvin and the Calvinists, not teaching that redemption occurred as a means of carrying out God's election, as well as the Arminians and the hypothetical universalists who maintained that election was a subset of the doctrine of redemption. See, Scaer, D., "The Nature and Extent of the Atonement in Lutheran Theology," 10, no. 4 (1967): 179.

²³ Luther, *Comm. on Peter*, 36.

be “made children of God.”²⁴ Christ’s redemption was also the means by which individuals enter into the “kingdom of faith.”²⁵ Luther recognized a causal link between Christ’s redemption and the salvation of God’s elect.

To summarize Luther’s doctrine of redemption by merely stamping it with the term ‘universal’ is misleading. We must appreciate that he affirmed both universal and particular elements in his doctrine of Christ’s redemption. According to Luther, Christ died to provide legal redemption and a warrant for all to believe, yet he also died to secure salvation and all the instrumental means in order to apply salvation to the elect. Christ was Satisfier and Victor in two different respects, however, both were intentional. Christ was a purposeful Redeemer who accomplished all his aims perfectly, though with diverse ends.²⁶

3.3: John Calvin (1509-1564)

The significance of Calvin’s contribution to the development of the doctrine of redemption can hardly be overstated. For centuries theologians on both sides of the atonement controversy have laid claim to his teachings.²⁷ Writing in response to Rome’s heterodoxy, Calvin’s primary focus was to exalt the all-sufficient power and grace of Christ. He was not concerned to provide the intricate details of his perspective on the extent of Christ’s redemption.²⁸ He, therefore, did not employ the language or terminology of sufficiency and efficiency or definite and limited

²⁴ Luther, *Comm. on Peter*, 36.

²⁵ Luther, *Thirtie Foure...Sermons*, 38.

²⁶ Fraser shared the belief that Christ’s redemption was aimed at diverse ends. He maintained that Christ sought to establish both universal warrant for all and salvation for the elect alone.

²⁷ The debates originated in part from the question of whether Beza, Calvin’s protégé, necessarily altered Calvin’s doctrine of redemption by explicitly limiting Christ’s purpose to the elect and introducing a supralapsarian interpretation of God’s decrees. White explains, “Beza’s teaching on predestination is associated especially with his *Tabula praedestinationis* of 1555, the book which contained his influential diagram of the order of predestination, later adapted by William Perkins.” Therefore, Beza’s Calvinism was foundational in defining the Puritan particularist position delineated in the Westminster Standards. See, White, *Predestination*, 13.

²⁸ See, Kennedy, K. D., *Union With Christ As Key to John Calvin's Understanding of the Extent of the Atonement* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 21. Boersma states that Calvin’s understanding of the *unio mystica* conveyed a completeness in Christ. He maintains that according to Calvin it was incomprehensible that Christ would bestow a portion of the benefits of his redemption for one population of the redeemed while withholding the fullness of Christ’s salvific blessings. Thus, Boersma’s examination of Calvin’s doctrine of union with Christ provides warrant to refute those who claim that Calvin taught a form of hypothetical universalism, at least as it is defined in this thesis. See, Boersma, H., “Calvin and the Extent of the Atonement,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (1992): 341-344.

atonement, terms which have played such key roles in the discussion of the doctrine of redemption since his time.²⁹ This, however, has not kept advocates of both a universalist and particularist understanding of Christ's redemption from dogmatically asserting on which side Calvin's doctrine of redemption falls.

Kendall, for example, declares that one of the fundamental elements of Calvin's theology is "his belief that Christ died indiscriminately for all men."³⁰ Clifford, like Kendall, argues that Calvin affirmed universal redemption and equates the decree to send Christ for all with a conditional decree to save all men.³¹ These conclusions are quite clearly based on Calvin's statements, like, "The sacrifice [of Christ] was ordained by the eternal decree of God, to expiate the sins of the world," or his comment that "Christ...obtained deliverance for the whole human race."³² Conversely, particularists maintain that universalists interpret such passages in isolation from the broader teachings of Calvin concerning God's decree, and thus, incorrectly conclude that Calvin's understanding of God's revealed will introduced universality to his doctrine of redemption. According to Helm, the only way to produce an accurate depiction of Calvin's doctrine of redemption is to recognize the unity of Christ's role as Redeemer and its saving effects.³³ Particularists, therefore, emphasize God's predestining decree as the controlling feature in Calvin's doctrine of redemption.

²⁹ Godfrey, W. R., "Reformed Thought on the Extent of the Atonement to 1618," *WTJ* 37 (1975): 137.

³⁰ *CEC*, 13.

³¹ See, Clifford, A. C., *Calvinus: Authentic Calvinism a Clarification* (Norwich, UK: Charenton Reformed Publishing, 1996), 14. Bell agrees with Kendall and Clifford that Calvin's doctrine of redemption is faithfully represented by hypothetical universalism, which subordinated the decree of election to the decision to send Christ as the universal Redeemer. See, Bell, M. C., "Calvin and the Extent of the Atonement," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 55 (1983): 119-121. Blocher, however, contends that there is no evidence of Calvin's sympathies towards hypothetical universalism when commenting on 1 John 2:2, Amyraut's chief proof text. See, Blocher, H. "The Atonement in John Calvin's Theology" *The Glory of the Atonement* C.E. Hill and F.A. James III. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 280. In his doctoral thesis, Doyle claims that on the basis of the extensive quotations for both universal and limited aspects of Christ's redemption that "Calvin flatly contradicts himself." Doyle's conclusions are unsatisfactory and assume that Calvin was unaware of tensions within his theological system. See, Doyle, R. C., "The Context of Moral Decision Making in the Writings of John Calvin: The Christological Ethics of Eschatological Order" (Ph.D., University of Aberdeen, 1981), 277.

³² Calvin, J., *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke* Trans. by W. Pringle. Calvin's Commentaries (XVII) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 200 and 277.

³³ Helm, *Calvin*, 13-31.

The goal of this section on Calvin's doctrine of redemption is to understand better Calvin's view on God's purpose in the redemption of Christ. This will further inform the discussions concerning the extent of Christ's redemption, yet as Muller explains,

The person of Christ cannot be reduced to the status of mere means to an end; rather, at the very heart of God, the underlying will to save is defined by the willingness of the Son, himself the God who decrees, to assume the form of a servant and become the means of salvation.³⁴

It is the aim of this section to relate what Calvin says about God's design in sending Christ and his decree to save, not to resolve definitively the debates surrounding Calvin's views on the extent of Christ's redemption.

Calvin was utterly convinced that Christ represented the provision of all that sinners needed for salvation. By the time that Calvin was preaching and teaching, the Reformation had gained sufficient momentum that he was not so concerned with Roman abuses, like Luther, but with Catholicism itself. He attacked the notion that Christ was needed as a perpetual sacrifice, and therefore rejected the mass and, more specifically, the Catholic interpretation of transubstantiation. He maintained that Christ's blood was so perfectly suited to its duty that it only had to be shed once for our salvation.³⁵ He explains, "That not even the least drop of life can be found out of Christ,—that there is no other remedy for our poverty and want, than what he conveys to us from his own abundance."³⁶ The crucified Christ, therefore, was a sinner's only hope and provision.

Whatever it was that Christ accomplished on the cross, whether universal or particular in nature, Calvin asserted that Christ's redemption must be applied by the Spirit through faith. It was the work of the Spirit, according to Calvin, whereby the objective price of reconciliation translated into actual reconciliation for an individual sinner.³⁷ The Spirit brought reconciliation as he provided the gift of faith. Calvin

³⁴ *Decree*, 173.

³⁵ See, Calvin, J., *Sermon, of Maister John Calvin* Trans. by T. Stocker. (London: John Windet, 1592), 36.

³⁶ Calvin, J., *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* Trans. by J. Owen. Calvin's Commentaries (XIX) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 208.

³⁷ Calvin taught that there was cooperation between the Son, who purchased redemption, and the Spirit, who applied redemption, in order that the redeemed might be reconciled and assured of the

viewed the work of the Spirit as an extension of Christ's work by not only applying the term reconciliation to the work of the Spirit but also the work of the Son in his death.³⁸ Faith, respectively, was a benefit which was purchased by the merits of Christ's redemption.³⁹ The causal connection between Christ's redemption and the work of the Spirit in granting faith helps particularists to substantiate their claim to be the true heirs of Calvin's theology.

Proponents of both universalism and particularism recognize the need for a connection between the work of God the Son in securing salvation and the work of God the Holy Spirit in applying it. Kendall argues that Christ's redemption must not be regarded nakedly or merely as an external act but be evaluated in terms of the power of the Spirit.⁴⁰ Similarly, Beeke, a particularist, states, "The objectivity of salvation in Christ is bound to the subjective sealing of the Spirit."⁴¹ The distance between the redemption of Christ and the application of the Spirit is at the heart of the disagreement between Calvin and Calvinists. Respectively, neither side of the debate doubts whether Christ's redemption must be applied, it is only how this application relates to Christ's redemption that is in question.⁴²

How closely related, therefore, are Christ's redemption and the application of the benefits of his redemption, according to Calvin? The answer to this question lies

remission of sins. See, Calvin, J., *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* Trans. by J. Pringle. Calvin's Commentaries (XX) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 113.

³⁸ Calvin wrote, "We are reconciled to God in no other way than by the one death of Christ, sin is rightly said to be put away or destroyed by it." See, Calvin, J., *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews* Calvin's Commentaries (XXII) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 219.

³⁹ Calvin, J., *Aphorismes of Christian Religion* M.I. Piscator ed. and H. Holland trans. (London: Richard Field and Robert Dexter, 1596), 57.

⁴⁰ *CEC*, 16.

⁴¹ Beeke, J. R., *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* 89, American University Studies (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 69.

⁴² Accordingly, neither the universalists nor particularists specifically argued for salvation *ex opere operato* from Christ's redemption. The real issue, therefore, was not the inclusion of conditional language but the question of what part faith played in justification. Particularists, including Calvin and Fraser, defined faith as an instrumental means in justification, and in contrast, Arminius and the hypothetical universalists conceived of faith as a true moral condition, whereby a believer is declared righteous on the basis of his faith rather than Christ's righteousness. Wollebius, Voetius and Turretin appropriately acknowledge the difference between decreeing that an end be achieved through a particular means and decreeing an end upon a condition. See, Wollebius, J. G. Voetius and F. Turretin, *Reformed Dogmatics* Ed. and Trans. by J.W. Beardslee III. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 344-345.

in large part in Calvin's understanding of Christ's purpose in coming into the world. Why? Because all parties represented in this chapter agree that Christ's sacrifice is of infinite value. The Son of God's blood is enough to satisfy the sins of ten worlds. Relevant insights, therefore, must move beyond references to the quality of Christ's redemption. Additionally, it is inaccurate to draw conclusions about the relationship between Christ's redemption and the application of that redemption simply based on Christ's title as Redeemer or Savior in abstraction from his employment of that office. The infinite value of Christ's sacrifice and his role as Redeemer are, therefore, both most precisely defined in terms of what Christ purposes to do as the Redeemer of sinners.

As Redeemer, Christ paid the price of redemption, which manifests itself in a genuine offer of salvation to all who hear it. According to Calvin, however, Christ's redemption also procured the effects of the universal promise.⁴³ Thus, Christ determined to work in the hearts of the elect in order that they might accept this offer and thus sit securely before the judgment seat of God.⁴⁴ Calvin equates 'the Redeemer' with 'the Giver of life and glory.'⁴⁵ Christ, therefore, was sent into the world to die to make sinners righteous.⁴⁶ He was devoted to saving his people from their sins, not merely providing the possibility of salvation.⁴⁷ The purposeful redemption of Christ and the salvation which flows to the elect from Christ's redemption confirms that Christ achieved his designed end. This does not entirely eliminate the possibility of a broader extent to Christ's redemption, nor does it necessarily confine Calvin to a Westminsterian form of particularism. It does, however, convey quite clearly that God purposed to use Christ's redemption as the means to both accomplishing and securing salvation for the elect. Accordingly, Christ's intentions to save are absolutely efficacious, though limited in scope.⁴⁸

What part does Calvin's doctrine of the revealed will of God play in defining the parameters of his doctrine of redemption? Does God's revealed will not convey

⁴³ Calvin, *Comm. on Hebrews*, 186-187.

⁴⁴ *Institutes*, II.17.5

⁴⁵ *Institutes*, III.9.5

⁴⁶ Calvin, *Sermons*, 33.

⁴⁷ *Institutes*, II.17.6

⁴⁸ This is the opposite of Amyraut's opinion, who declared that Christ's intention to save was unlimited and universal, although limited in its efficacy to save.

that God is actually determined to save all sinners without distinction? Unless we are willing to embrace Amyraut's position that God's revealed will is juxtaposed to his secret will, which introduces an inconsistency in the decrees of God, then we must recognize that God's conditional invitation to all sinners does not imply a will to save them. The evidence rejected any notion of tension, much less a contradiction, between God's revealed will and his secret will.⁴⁹ God's revealed will declares what God is ready to do, not what he has done.⁵⁰ The gospel, which presents Christ as the crucified Savior, warrants a sinner to come into God's favor without fear of presumption.⁵¹ Christ as offered in the gospel was the object of faith, according to Calvin. Therefore, faith clings to the offer, not the knowledge of Christ's intentions in his redemption.

Calvin maintained that which was conditional and potential from humanity's perspective was absolute from God's vantage point. The benefits of Christ's redemption, therefore, though seemingly indiscriminately and arbitrarily granted, were supplied and applied to the elect in accordance with God's eternal decree.⁵² Prioritizing the secret will of God in order to interpret the redemption of Christ does not entail that God's revealed will is unimportant or obsolete. It is the Christian's guide to salvation and life, according to Calvin.⁵³ It is the instrumental means through which God has ordained to communicate the benefits of his absolute, predestining decrees. Faith is born in the heart of a sinner by hearing the Word of God, and faith is given according to the predetermined end for which God sent his Son. Consequently, according to Calvin, the publication of Christ's redemption in the gospel was the means of bringing about God's secret will in the decree. Calvin repositioned the doctrine of predestination within Book III of *The Institutes*, not

⁴⁹ Calvin affirmed the consistency of predestination and the universal offer. See, *Institutes*, III.24.17.

⁵⁰ Calvin, J., *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God* (London: James Clarke & Co. Limited, 1961), 105-109.

⁵¹ Calvin, *Comm on Corinthians*, 239.

⁵² Clifford rebuts the arguments of those who attempt to define Calvin as a particularist. Reading Calvin through Amyraut's lens, he suggests that both the revealed will which conveys God's universal will to save and God's predestining decree run parallel in Calvin's theology. Clifford demonstrates very little support for his claims and, like Amyraut, is not concerned to explain the apparent inconsistencies between the revealed will and the secret will of God according to his proposal. See, Clifford, *Calvinus*, 63.

⁵³ Warfield, B. B., *Predestination in the Reformed Confessions* (Philadelphia, PA: MacCalla & Company, 1901), 66.

because he was subordinating predestination to Christ's redemption, but because Christology is the proper context wherein God reveals the effects of his eternal decree. Therefore, Christ's redemption is the place where God's eternal decree is made effectual.⁵⁴

In conclusion, Calvin acknowledged that Christ was sent to do the will of his Father and to finish the work that was set before him. This meant that as Redeemer, Christ not only pledged his obedience to the will of his Father to die, but also to save his people from their sins. Calvin reasoned, therefore, that Christ's redemption not only included his death, but his resurrection, his ascension, and his intercession for the elect.⁵⁵ By incorporating all these elements in his definition of redemption, Calvin did not simply wish to emphasize the sufficiency of Christ's redemption for all, but the efficacy of it for the elect. Accordingly, redemption constituted of the beginning links in the 'golden chain' of salvation. Christ's price of reconciliation purchased the elect for God that they would become sons and heirs of righteousness.⁵⁶ Christ's death meant victory for the elect because Christ redeemed them to perseverance unto glory.⁵⁷ He assumed that this chain could never be broken because it finds its origins in the decree of God. According to Calvin, there was a clearly established causal link between God's eternal decree, Christ's redemption, and the benefits which the elect receive, including faith. Thus, revealing that the purpose of God was the effectual, controlling factor in Calvin's doctrine of redemption.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Kendall denies this conclusion based on his contention that Calvin unequivocally taught a doctrine of universal redemption in which Christ's only purpose was to render salvation possible. The evidence seems to state otherwise. Hence, one is left with either the option that Beza was faithful in presenting Calvin as a particularist or the possibility that Calvin understood Christ to have a two-fold purpose in dying, one for the elect and one for the reprobate. Fraser opts for the latter interpretation of Christ's redemption. See, *CEC*, 15.

⁵⁵ Griffin demonstrates that this more holistic conception of Christ's redemption was consistently employed by Owen and the Westminsterian particularists. See, Griffin, H., "High Priest in Heaven: The Intercession of the Exalted Christ in Reformed Theology, Analysis and Critique" (Ph.D., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2004), 23, 27, 31, 72-73 and 128-129. See also, Trueman, C. R., *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1998), 16-17.

⁵⁶ Calvin, *Com on Corinthians*, 248.

⁵⁷ *Institutes*, II.17.4 and III. 22.7.

⁵⁸ Calvin's adherence to the absolute nature of God's effectual decree further distinguishes his thought from the conditional nature of God's decrees in the teachings of hypothetical universalists.

3.4: Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609)

Arminius and the Remonstrants developed a doctrine of redemption that dramatically shifted the focus of Christ's redemption away from Calvin's God-centered interpretation of Christ's redemption based on God's eternal decree towards an extreme anthropocentrism.⁵⁹ The Reformed community reacted strongly to Arminianism and quickly condemned his view of redemption as an example of heterodoxy. Arminianism immediately became the prime target of the Reformed offensive. Reformed theologians became increasingly reactionary towards even subtle deviations from accepted Reformed orthodoxy. Many were unjustifiably labeled 'Arminian' in an attempt to suppress the influence of Arminianism. Men like Fraser, Davenant, Amyraut, and Baxter were all collectively grouped together by their contemporaries under the banner of Arminianism. Rarely were distinctions among theologians' doctrines of universality acknowledged. There are, however, important dissimilarities that must be noted not only to understand Fraser, but also to make sense of the history of the debates over this controversial doctrine. For this reason, it is imperative to grasp the key features of Arminian universalism, rather than perpetuating an Arminian caricature.

If Beza's Calvinism predicated an overly rigid predestinarian form of his master's system of thought, then Arminius' view on redemption and the nature of God's decrees was a radical pendulum swing in the opposite direction. Whereas Beza emphasized the absolute supremacy of God in his overt supralapsarian view of the decrees, Arminius prioritized human freedom, making God's decrees ultimately dependent on the desires of men. According to Arminius, God graciously initiates the relationship with humanity by supplying the means of salvation in the redemption of his Son, but then God must observe how a person will respond to this offer of grace before decreeing salvation to him. Arminius' innovations were not simply a radical departure from a rigid scholastic Calvinism, but also marked a sweeping change from

⁵⁹ Arminius declared it repugnant and absurd to assume that God would unilaterally determine the future contingencies irrespective of human choice. According to Arminius, one of God's fundamental graces was his decision to create human beings utterly free. Hence, Christ's work of redemption is not an effort to modify that plan, but a means of preserving it. See, *WA*, I.761. Davis explains that Arminius adopted a "conditional understanding of predestination," wherein "God's decree is based on the divine foreknowledge of the contingent acts of the human will. God's grace is necessary for salvation but is not alone sufficient, apart from the cooperation of the human will." See, Davis, J. J., "The Perseverance of the Saints: A History of the Doctrine," *JETS* 34 (1991): 222.

the theology of Luther and Calvin. The human will replaced God's will as the determining factor for the efficacy of Christ's redemption.

Arminius did not denounce all accepted orthodox norms. He affirmed that Christ's redemption was needed for the satisfaction and forgiveness of sins. However, Arminius was quick to redefine these categories and the use of these terms in order to fit into his doctrine of universal redemption. Christ was sent as a Mediator to provide satisfaction for the whole of humanity without distinction, yet this satisfaction was limited in its design and efficacy. It was limited with respect to the fact that it only furnished a potential for salvation and thus merely procured a reprieve from temporal punishment. It in no way secured or causally established a right to or possession of salvation to any person.⁶⁰

Arminius, in accordance with the orthodox opinion, maintained that Christ's redemption was necessary for salvation. However, Christ's redemption was only remotely and not causally related to salvation.⁶¹ Arminius asserted that Christ's redemption provided a general payment, hence the title 'general reference theory' that is commonly associated with his views on Christ's mediation.⁶² The general reference of Christ's death implied a provision of grace which may or may not lead a person to salvation. The general or common grace that was supplied through Christ's redemption enabled all to believe, but did not ensure that any would actually believe. The separation between redemption and salvation within Arminius' general reference theory was due in part to his view on the nature of Christ's mediation. According to Arminius, Christ mediated only as a priest, but salvation was withheld for those who made use of Christ's general grace by accepting Christ as king.⁶³ This represented a fundamental shift away from Calvin's claim that Christ's role as Mediator included his role as Savior.⁶⁴ Contrary to Calvin, Arminius sought to broaden the parameters

⁶⁰ *WA*, I.770. Nicole criticizes Arminian redemption and hypothetical universalism for replacing absolute redemption with "an only moderately successful program of rehabilitation of man." See, Nicole, R., *Standing Forth: Collected Writings of Roger Nicole* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 254.

⁶¹ Godfrey, therefore, concludes that Christ was sent to die in the place of the world, but not for its good. See, *TIC*, 211.

⁶² *WA*, I.416.

⁶³ *WA*, I.423.

⁶⁴ Arminius does call Christ, the Mediator, a Savior, but only a Savior by merit. It is only after an individual exercises his free will to believe that Christ becomes a Savior by efficacy. See, *WA*, II.211-212.

of Christ's priesthood without also extending the boundaries of Christ's kingship. By isolating Christ's priestly office from his kingly office, Arminius justified his separation between redemption accomplished and applied.

The general reference theory introduced a hierarchy in God's decrees unlike any hierarchy seen in the early Reformers. According to Arminius, God's first decree in creating humankind was to grant them free will, which liberty was the basis of the ability to make a truly "good" choice.⁶⁵ The fall of humanity subsequently restricted man's freedom to choose good, and therefore, God sent his Son to break the chains of sin and pay the price for liberty.⁶⁶ Christ provided this universal freedom by bestowing on all humanity a grace that was sufficient to allow them to believe. Believing, which is the action of faith, was so essential to Arminius because God decreed to save only on the merits of personal faith. Arminius argued that God's decree to save was based solely upon a person's choice to believe, rather than upon Christ's redemption or even upon universal grace supplied by Christ's redemption. Such a proposal exemplified a profound departure from Reformed orthodoxy. The Reformed community would have been equally disconcerted by the fact that when Arminius identified believing as the foundation of God's decree, he *de facto* made the act of faith, i.e., believing, the object of faith. Luther and Calvin, before Arminius, had both affirmed the importance of faith as a means of personally receiving salvation. However, both assumed that faith was a gift of God's grace as a result of Christ's redemption. Therefore, faith could not be the foundation of God's decree to save, but rather a product of it.

Arminius' conviction that God's decree to save was dependent upon a human response to universal grace came at a significant cost. In short, the preeminence of man's will necessarily constrained the efficacy of God's will. According to Arminius, God desired all humankind to be saved, but God would not infringe on man's freedom to choose in order to bring his desires to fruition.⁶⁷ As a result, God's

⁶⁵ See, *WA*, I.755-756. See also Tyacke's discussion of Arminian distinctives, Tyacke, *Aspects*, 132.

⁶⁶ Arminius referred to Christ's ransom as the external cause of Christian liberty, providing moral liberty. He rejected the idea of the noetic effect of sin, which to some extent would have limited an individual's ability to choose between heaven and hell. See, *WA*, II.259.

⁶⁷ The English Arminian, John Goodwin, maintained that "If you make salvation and reprobation a matter of eternal foreordination, you vitiate the message of the Gospel." God cannot will contrary to his commands. The gospel presupposes a need for believing to be saved. Goodwin argued that if Calvinistic foreordination is true then the gospel is redundant because salvation is already secured. Antinomians and Hyper-Calvinists held similar presuppositions by failing to distinguish between the

will was not always efficacious and his decrees only referred to an internal recognition of what will occur based on man's foreseen response to grace.⁶⁸ God's decree, therefore, was neither the immediate nor the fundamental cause of any person's salvation.⁶⁹ According to Arminius, God was sovereign to establish the stipulations of salvation and provides the grace to make salvation possible, but was impotent to ensure that anyone would actually be saved. Arminius unapologetically rejected the Reformed notion that God's grace was irresistible.⁷⁰

Arminius and the Arminian doctrine of redemption represented a radical deviation from the norms of Protestant theology in the 16th and 17th centuries. Such a departure was not principally determined by their avowed universality, given that many other Reformers arguably held to some form of universal redemption.⁷¹ Rather, it was Arminius' contention that the human will was the seat of ultimate determination of how Christ's redemption would be applied that differentiated his perspective from the orthodoxy of his contemporaries. God's decree of salvation,

eternal and the existential aspects of salvation. See, Hinson, W. J., "The Theological Thought of John Goodwin (1593-1665)" (Ph.D., University of Edinburgh, 1953), 123-124 and Bangs, C., *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1971), 215.

⁶⁸ Arminius defined God's predestining decree as immutable. However, immutability was based not on the sovereign choices of God, but on God's ability to foresee perfectly an individual's free actions. See, *WA*, III.545.

⁶⁹ *WA*, I.753.

⁷⁰ Arminius unapologetically stated that grace sometimes does not obtain its designed effect. See, *WA*, II.721-722.

⁷¹ Daniel claims that Luther, Bullinger, and Martyr, if not Calvin, all suggest the doctrine of universal redemption. See, Daniels, *Hyper-Calvinism*, 518-519.

therefore, was only absolute and immutable with respect to the fact that God accurately identified all who would believe. God predestined based on foreseen faith. God's predestining decree was subordinate to man's choice. Christ was sent as the initiator of God's decree, not the executor of it.⁷² Salvation and the efficacy of Christ's redemption, therefore, were defined in terms of the purpose of man much more than the purpose of God.

⁷² *TIC*, 103.

CHAPTER IV: DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION DURING THE POST-REFORMATION PERIOD

The theologians and theologies examined in this chapter represent the immediate context out of which Fraser's doctrine of redemption was developed. Not all these theologians were equally important to Fraser, but each has been chosen because he provides elements with which Fraser's unique two-fold perspective on Christ's redemption should be differentiated or identified. These theologians reveal the complex nature of redemption, substantiating the need to broaden the scope of scrutiny beyond a theologian's views on the extent of Christ's redemption.

4.1: John Davenant (1572-1641)

Unfortunately for the Remonstrants, the rise of Arminianism emerged during the height of Calvinistic optimism. Godfrey comments on the Calvinistic vision of the 17th century, writing, "The Reformed community of Europe continued to hope fervently for an expansion of Protestantism into the Roman Catholic areas of Europe and for reconciliation with Lutherans that would create a united Protestant front in Europe."¹ Arminianism posed a direct threat to the success of the vision for a united Reformed Europe. Consequently, when the international synod was called at Dort in November 1618 in order to determine how best to deal with the menacing Remonstrants, Arminians never truly stood a chance of a fair trial.² Reformed theologians arrived at the synod already convinced that Arminians were guilty of heterodoxy. The synod, therefore, sought to redirect discussions regarding

¹ *TIC*, 4.

² The Remonstrants were men dedicated to the promulgation of Arminius' teachings. Arminius died in 1609, but Arminianism was very much still alive. The Synod of Dort was convened in order to respond to the five articles summarized in the *Remonstrance*, which delineated a thorough anti-Calvinist soteriology. See, Tyacke, *Aspects*, 156.

soteriology back towards the purposes of God. This result was that, “The Arminians lost on every controverted point, and the outcome of the synod was the promulgating of a thoroughly Calvinist set of canons.”³

Dort’s affirmation of predestination, particular redemption, the irresistibility of grace, and the perseverance of the saints, however, was not without its struggle. The issue of the extent of the redemption, in particular, surfaced as one of the most divisive issues among the delegates. It not only threatened to disrupt the synod but also the vision for unity among the European Reformed churches.⁴ John Davenant, James Ussher and Samuel Ward were among those who argued passionately for a broader interpretation of Christ’s redemption, while the majority held firmly to the doctrine of limited or particular redemption. Despite the disagreements and the potential for disaster, delegates still managed to present a united front, judging the evils of Arminianism a much greater threat to orthodoxy.⁵

The motto, “sufficient for all, but efficacious for the elect,” serves as the legacy of Dort regarding the nature and extent of Christ’s redemption.⁶ Within the overall context of the Canons of Dort, the phrase quite clearly conveyed the idea that the dignity and value of Christ’s death implied that his redemption was sufficient for each and every individual sinner, yet this sufficiency was governed by the decretive intention of God in sending his Son for only the elect.⁷ However, post-Dort, the idiom—sufficient for all, efficacious for the elect—was somewhat ambiguously utilized depending on the presuppositions of the individual theologian. For example, Davenant, Ussher, and Ward employed the phrase in order to promote not just a hypothetical sufficiency based on the intrinsic worth of Christ’s redemption, but a true sufficiency based on the intention of God to provide formally a Savior for the world.⁸ Many particularists who considered Christ’s redemption to be limited to the

³ Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 355. See also, Tyacke, *Aspects*, 157 and 164.

⁴ *TIC*, 132.

⁵ Milton, A., *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 421.

⁶ Ursinus is credited with coining this expression. See, *TIC*, 96-97.

⁷ Strehle, *The Extent*, 13.

⁸ Davenant, J., *A Dissertation on the Death of Christ* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1832), 378.

elect alone condemned those who included the reprobate in the scope of Christ's redemption as "half-Remonstrants."⁹

The label "half-Remonstrants," however is misleading and simply another example of how anxieties over Arminianism during this period prejudiced evaluations of theologians who were seen to deviate from the norm. This section will demonstrate that Davenant's *via media* was hardly half way towards Arminianism. He emphatically rejected the Arminian notion of the general reference theory of Christ's death, claiming that God's gift of Christ illustrated God's desire for all to be saved, not his decree actually to save them. Davenant concentrated on the universal warrant that Christ's redemption provided for all to believe the gospel.¹⁰

Davenant fought to include a statement in the fifth Canon that explicitly highlighted Christ's redemption as the motivating principle "*why* the Gospel should be preached to all men," since he considered the merit of Christ's redemption the foundation of "the universal promise of the Gospel."¹¹ He reasoned that there could be no universal offer of salvation without the sufficient sacrifice of the Savior.¹² However, the universal offer was grounded in God's love and desire for sinners to be saved, not in his will to save. The importance of distinguishing between God's desire to save and his will to save is fundamental to keeping Davenant's doctrine of Christ's redemption in proper perspective. God's will relates to his eternal decree, while his desire for universal salvation correlates to his omni-benevolent nature. Davenant affirmed that God willed the limitation of salvation to the elect, yet he also recognized that God takes no delight in the condemnation of any of his creatures.

Davenant's doctrine of Christ's redemption is often associated with hypothetical universalism because he differentiates his understanding of sufficiency from the predominant orthodox opinion. He argued that Christ was sent in order to supply a universally sufficient sacrifice, yet sufficiency was not exclusively defined in terms of Christ's intrinsic worth. According to Davenant, such a narrow view of

⁹ Como, "Puritans, Predestination and the Construction," 72.

¹⁰ Davenant distinguished between God's desire for all men to be saved and God's will that all would be saved through Christ. He passionately embraced the former, but denied the latter. This marks an important difference between the universal and revealed provision of God and the particular and secret purpose of God.

¹¹ White, *Predestination*, 192 and Reformed Presbytery, *The True State*, 39.

¹² *DDC*, 382-385.

sufficiency would suggest that Christ's redemption only symbolized a hypothetical sufficiency. Christ's redemption was not a hypothetical sacrifice and, accordingly, did not merely communicate a hypothetical sufficiency. He, therefore, declared that Christ's sufficiency was rooted in the fact that Christ's redemption established an evangelical covenant "confirmed with the whole human race."¹³ In this covenant, God promised to grant the remission of sins and eternal life upon believing. Believing, in turn, represented a condition which must first be met before the benefits of Christ's redemption were conveyed to any individual. The conditional nature of this covenant implied that Christ's redemption was not immediately applied but was applicable.¹⁴ He explained,

Christ by shedding his blood redeemed the world of mankind, satisfied Gods justice, and obtained a way of salvation for every man: But God never intended that the outward act should presently put every man in possession of pardon or of a state of justification and salvation. But the way which he opened for every one of us to partake the fruit of our redemption and of his plenary satisfaction, is by repentance and faith to come and lay hold of the Redeemer.¹⁵

Davenant separated Christ's accomplishment of redemption and the application of his benefits. However, unlike Arminius, Davenant maintained that God ensured that Christ's redemption was savingly applied to the elect, rather than assuming that Christ merely offered a "naked sacrifice," which would cover the masses and out of which some would be elected.¹⁶ Accordingly, Davenant embraced both the separation between redemption accomplished and applied and the presence of the covenantal stipulation, while remaining unreservedly convinced that the efficacy of Christ's redemption belonged to God's eternal decrees. Davenant stated that, "The

¹³ Davenant, J., *An Exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1832), 401ff.

¹⁴ *DDC*, 343 and 351.

¹⁵ Davenant, J., *Animadversions Upon a Treatise Intitled Gods Love to Mankind* (Cambridge: Roger Daniel, 1641), 298.

¹⁶ Davenant challenged the notion that Christ's death was a "naked sacrifice," which was aimed at disassociating his views on Christ's redemption from Arminius' general reference theory of Christ's redemption. Strehle misinterprets Davenant's insistence that Christ's redemption be applied personally by extracting it from its broader context. Therefore, he wrongly concludes that Davenant taught the efficacy of Christ's redemption was principally determined by an individual's willing application. See, Strehle, *Extent*, 164.

death of Christ is not a remedy applicable to expiate the sins of any one, except according to the ordination and acceptation of God.”¹⁷ By recognizing that God’s sovereign purposes dictated the efficacy of Christ’s redemption, Davenant took a step away from Arminianism and a step towards identifying himself with the Reformed consensus.¹⁸

The fundamental agreement between Davenant and his Reformed contemporaries does not imply total unanimity. Davenant maintained that rather than limiting Christ’s redemption to fulfilling God’s elective purposes, God designed Christ’s redemption to execute a two-fold purpose. The two-fold intention of God in the death of Christ was the primary rationale behind separating the accomplishment of redemption and its application for salvation.¹⁹ The two-fold purpose of Christ’s redemption meant that the elect were redeemed to salvation, in agreement with the principles of redemptive particularism, while all others were redeemed to common grace.²⁰ Christ’s redemption universally broke the devil’s power and claim, yet it was only the elect who were ultimately transferred into the hands of Christ to be saved.²¹ Davenant illustrated the distinction of Christ’s redemption of the elect and the non-elect by introducing a hierarchy within Christ’s priestly office. He proposed that Christ satisfied God’s justice for all, but only interceded for the elect.²² Intercession became the means of applying Christ’s redemption. Furthermore, this divided

¹⁷ DDC, 386.

¹⁸ Davenant understood Christ’s redemption and the covenant of grace differently than Fraser, specifically in terms of how redemption affected the reprobate, yet Davenant maintained with Fraser an absolute connection between Christ’s redemption and the application of the benefits of redemption to the elect. Thus, Davenant distanced himself from the hypothetical universalism with which he is often associated, stating, “But now, lest under this universal virtue of the death of Christ, which extends to all rational creatures, we should destroy its special efficacy, which actually pertains to the predestined alone, we shall enter upon the other part of the special prerogative of the elect in the death of Christ, both from the will of God the Father in giving his Son to death, and that of the Son in offering himself.” See, Davenant, DDC, 514; also see, 390, 396, 398-401 and Davenant, *Colossians*, I. 164.

¹⁹ Daniels, *Hyper-Calvinism*, 526.

²⁰ Davenant, DDC, 390.

²¹ Davenant, *Colossians*, 169. Ussher also referred to this two-fold redemption. He illustrated the idea in terms of the process by which a sinner is transported out of the power of darkness, and subsequently, admitted into the kingdom of glory. See, Ussher, J., *A Body of Divinity or The Summe and Substance of Christian Religion* (London: M.F., 1645), 151.

²² Ussher, *Body of Divinity*, 422.

Christ's work as priest on the cross and Christ's priestly work as the resurrected intercessor.²³

Did the inclusion of a two-fold aim undermine the primacy of God's purposes in Christ's redemption? It is a common oversight among historians and theologians who have previously investigated Davenant's doctrine of redemption to ignore the primacy of God's decrees, and also fail to reconcile Davenant's views regarding the supremacy of God's decrees with his two-fold doctrine of redemption. Equally common is simply to identify a two-fold purpose in redemption and immediately assume that Davenant advanced a form of hypothetical universalism. The connection with hypothetical universalism seems justifiable in light of Davenant's statement that, "It is decreed, that through the death of the second Adam, salvation is procurable for all men who are lost in the first Adam, before it is decreed to whom it may be given effectually and infallibly, and to whom it may not be given."²⁴ Davenant appears to be promoting the idea that election is a subordinate decree to the decree to save the whole world. However, though examples like these might be misleading or ambiguous, Davenant disavowed any form of conditionality or subordination of God's decrees. First, he never assumed that God purposed to save the entire world through Christ's redemption. When Davenant stated that Christ was given to make salvation 'procurable' for all men, he did not relate this to God's will, but to the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice.

Additionally, there is plenty of evidence in Davenant's writing to suggest that he retained an orthodox opinion concerning the nature and order of God's decrees, despite having taught that Christ was given for a dual purpose. Godfrey recognizes the fact that Davenant differentiates himself from both Arminius and Amyraut by

²³ Particularists usually defined redemption in terms of both priestly works. Most advocates of a dual reference of Christ's redemption, including Fraser, commonly adopted this distinction. Fraser denied that "actual formal Intercession is essential to the Office of the Mediator." *JF*, 243. However, Fraser maintained that these two aspects of Christ's redemption could not be divorced for the elect, stating "So did Christ pray for all he was a Priest for." *JF*, 241. Willis explains, "The *triplex munus* scheme is not a vehicle to help Calvin delineate three different functions of Christ; it sets forth three aspects of the ministry of the one redeeming Mediator." These offices of Christ and the benefits which flow from them cannot be kept from those who have been united to Christ by the Spirit. He is a complete Savior and those who partake of him by faith receive him wholly. See, Willis, D. E., *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-Called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology* II, H.A. Oberman. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1966), 85.

²⁴ *DDC*, 363.

affirming that in Christ's redemption there is "a prior secret will of election."²⁵ Likewise, Daniels acknowledges that God's two-fold purpose in Davenant's doctrine of redemption did not imply that Christ died equally for all because God's elective decree took pre-eminence. Davenant's two-fold doctrine of redemption, therefore, included non-salvific or common benefits which were granted to all humanity in addition to the "special intent" in the redemption which led the elect to salvation.²⁶ Davenant's claimed that Christ "so offered himself up as a sacrifice for the elect, that through his death not only they might be saved, if they should believe, but that they might actually believe and be saved."²⁷ According to Davenant's understanding of Christ's redemption, faith was a direct product of Christ's work based on God's eternal decree actually to save the elect through Christ's work.²⁸ Christ, therefore, may not have saved everyone through his redeeming blood, but he certainly saved some.

The *via media* represented by Davenant defended the universality of Christ's redemption as an expression of God's common love for all the world, but did not eliminate or "obscureth the speciall love and mercy of God prepared from all eternitie and bestowed in due time upon elect men."²⁹ In other words, he broadened the orthodox definition of redemption by including the non-elect as an aim of Christ's redemption, yet he did not assume that the presence of a universal element detracted from the particular purpose of God for saving the elect. His form of the middle-way, therefore, was not a half-way house to Arminianism, nor was it a regurgitation of Cameron and Amyraut's doctrine of redemption. It is best to describe Davenant's innovations as an addition to the Reformed orthodoxy of Dort, rather than a radical deviation from it. The foundational principles remained the same for both. The gap between the accomplishment of redemption and its application was bridged *in* Christ, according to God's intention to save the elect absolutely.

²⁵ *TIC*, 185.

²⁶ Daniels, *Hyper-Calvinism*, 526.

²⁷ *DDC*, 389.

²⁸ Lum explains that the key feature of the Synod of Dort's doctrine of redemption is that "election is viewed as being mediated through the death of Christ rather than faith." Why? Because "faith itself is considered to be one of the benefits of the atonement." Respectively, Davenant is a faithful representation of Dort's doctrine of purposeful redemption. See, Amyraut, *Brief Treatise*, trans. by Lum, iv.

²⁹ Davenant, J., *Animadversions Upon a Treatise Intituled Gods Love to Mankind* (Cambridge: Roger Daniel, 1641), 2.

Consequently, God's decrees were primary, and those decrees governed God's purposes in the redemption of his Son, whether strictly for the elect or whether the non-elect were included.

4.2: John Preston (1587-1628)

John Preston represents an interesting figure in the history of the development of the doctrine of redemption. He was brought up under the tutelage of William Perkins and embraced Perkins' fervor for the supremacy of God's decrees. Preston, however, soon became disillusioned with Perkins' interpretation of the extent of Christ's redemption and soon rejected the well-diagramed symmetry of Perkins' supralapsarianism.³⁰ Preston found the solution for his anxieties in the asymmetrical, middle-way of Davenant and Ussher.³¹ As a result, he synthesized scholastic absolutism and a broader reference in Christ's redemption, validating a form of universal particularism. Since Fraser was also determined to combine a doctrine of universal redemption with Westminsterian particularism and also advanced a form of universal particularism, it is no wonder that he appealed to Preston to substantiate his views.³² Fraser, however, was not the only one who cited Preston. Baxter also identified Preston when defending his arguments for conditional universalism.³³ The fact that both Fraser and Baxter claimed Preston as support illustrates the confusion surrounding Preston's interpretation of Christ's redemption. This section aims to provide greater clarity regarding the essential elements of Preston's doctrine of redemption and how his views relate to the developments in the doctrine of redemption during the Reformation and post-Reformation periods.

The first element of Preston's theology that must be understood in order to discern correctly his doctrine of redemption is his position on the decrees of election and reprobation. Preston promoted the idea that Christ's redemption was universal in its scope. This, however, did not deter him from passionately advancing the absolute

³⁰ Perkins, W., *Armillæ Aurea Works* (London: 1631), diagram of the order of God's decrees.

³¹ Moore, J. D., "'Christ is Dead for Him': John Preston (1587-1628) and English Hypothetical Universalism" (Ph.D., Univ. of Cambridge, 2000), 161-162 and 180.

³² *JF*, 163 and 251.

³³ Baxter, R., *Catholick Theologie: Plain, Pure, Peaceable for Pacification of the Dogmatical Word-Warriours* (London: Robert White, 1675), IV:50, 52; Baxter, R., *Universal Redemption of Mankind, by the Lord Jesus Christ* (London: Rising Sun, 1694), 480 and Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, I:206.

nature of God's decrees of election and reprobation.³⁴ The conviction concerning the absolute nature of God's decrees has led some modern scholars to re-evaluate how Preston understood the order of God's decrees. For example, Broughton maintains Preston was a thoroughgoing supralapsarian like Perkins, while Moore argues his position on the extent of Christ's redemption more accurately demonstrates a commitment to infralapsarianism.³⁵ The debate surrounding Preston's view on the order of the decrees, however, should not be used to imply that there was any question in Preston's mind as to whether Perkins was correct when he declared that God's decrees were both absolute and foremost in determining the design of Christ's redemption. Preston loathed Arminianism's notion that God's decrees were conditioned by man's response. Furthermore, in relation to the decrees of God, he also denied that efficacy of Christ's redemption was somehow conditionally suspended upon a secondary decree. He, therefore, reasoned that Christ's redemption was an instrumental cause or means of salvation based on God's predestining choices.³⁶

According to Preston, the primary purpose of Christ's redemption was to provide the means to save the elect.³⁷ Preston states that Christ was not merely a martyr to be revered, but a Savior of sinners to be worshiped. Christ was on a mission for his Father based on God's decree. Accordingly, Christ was destined to succeed and to finish the work of salvation that he had been sent to perform.³⁸ One of Christ's goals in his act of redemption was to purchase, not only satisfaction for sins for all humankind, but also to merit the gift of faith for God's elect.³⁹ He writes, "The

³⁴ Moore, *Christ Is Dead*, 64.

³⁵ Moore, *Christ Is Dead*, 71. See also, Preston, J., *The Saints Qualification* (London: R.B., 1633), III.16.

³⁶ Moore, *Christ Is Dead*, 79.

³⁷ Preston proposed that God covenanted with man in the sending of his Son. There was a single or external element to the covenant, but there was always a "double covenant" made with the elect. This double covenant meant that the conditions in the covenant were pronounced by God, namely the command to repent and believe, but also procured by God so that the elect will necessarily be saved. See, Preston, J., *Life Eternall or, A Treatise of the Knowledge of the Divine Essence and Attributes* (London: R.B., 1633), 86-87.

³⁸ Preston, J., *The Christian Freedome: or, The Charter of the Gospel, Shewing the Priviledge and Prerogative of the Saints by Vertue of the Covenant* (1641), 24. Preston maintained that if Christ had not determined to save through the cross, then the cross would have been of no effect.

³⁹ Preston, J., *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love* (London: W.I., 1630), 11. Preston states clearly that faith is the fruit of election, which flows through Christ's redemption. His position that faith is a gift

Decree of Election (by which God determined with himself to save some persons selected from the common Masse) is absolute, and therefore doth necessarily and irresistibly attain its effect.”⁴⁰ He continues, “The Decree of Election is absolute, so that the Lord looked upon nothing foreseen in the persons chosen, but absolutely decreed to work in them all conditions required to salvation.”⁴¹ Preston’s strong predestinarianism served to reaffirm his Reformed orthodoxy by endorsing the idea that God principally intended to send Christ for the elect, though he was offered to all.⁴²

Despite the evidence of his absolute particularism regarding the benefits of redemption for the elect, Preston deliberately broadened the extent of Christ’s redemption. Accordingly, he separated the accomplishment of redemption from the application of Christ’s benefits, a risk Preston thought worth taking in order to authenticate the universal offer of salvation.⁴³ He declared that as Christ’s redemption is “propounded generally, so is it generally executed.”⁴⁴ “Christ is dead for you” became a classic Prestonian expression. He believed that by presenting Christ’s redemption as universally given, he could more convincingly convey that God was sincere in promising pardon and would establish a warrant for believing the gospel.⁴⁵ He exhorted his readers to reflect on the surety of God’s promises as a means of wooing them to trust in the Savior’s blood. He writes,

of Christ’s redemption serves to distance Preston from Baxter’s position on faith as a conditional element used to fulfill the covenantal law.

⁴⁰ Preston, J., *The Position of John Preston, Doctor in Divinity, Sometimes of Emanuel Colledge in Cambridge, and Preacher at Lincolns-Inn; Concerning the Irresistibleness of Converting Grace* (London: J.G., 1654), 16.

⁴¹ Preston, *The Position*, 16.

⁴² Preston, *Breast-Plate*, 11. More often than speaking of the elect as the reference to Christ’s redemption, Preston recognized the church or believers as the beneficiaries of Christ’s redemption. See, Moore, *Christ Is Died*, 85-86.

⁴³ Preston largely based the application of the benefits of Christ’s redemption on Christ’s intercession. According to Preston, Christ died for all without distinction, but Christ only intercedes for the elect. This is a common feature of those who advocate a doctrine of universal redemption. See, Moore, *Christ Is Died*, 88.

⁴⁴ Preston, *Breast-Plate*, 13.

⁴⁵ The Marrowmen of the 18th century also adopted the phrase “Christ is dead for you” in order to substantiate their claims that all individuals have the warrant to believe without reference to the intentions of Christ in redemption, which are the subject of God’s secret, electing will. In connection with his research on the Marrow Controversy, Lachman argues that Preston employed the phrase in a similar way to the Marrowmen. Thus, Lachman argues that Preston was not making a statement regarding the extent of the redemption, but the extent of the gospel offer. See, Lachman, D. C., *The*

You may build upon this sure Word: Now when you put all these together, that the Lord hath said it, and put his seale to it, if he should not doe it, the death of Christ should be of none effect, no flesh should be saved, no man would worship God.⁴⁶

Preston reasoned that the evidence that some individuals were actually saved would so impact those who heard the gospel that they would be persuaded that they too could trust the promises of God for salvation. Preston's argument for the universality of Christ's redemption, therefore, was based on providing the warrant to believe, not based on the purpose of God to save all individuals from their sins. This is an important distinction and serves to distinguish Preston's form of universal redemption, not only from Arminius, but also from Amyraut and Baxter. It also reveals the nature of agreement between Preston and Davenant and ultimately between Preston and Fraser. Preston's doctrine of universal redemption was grounded in the absolute and unconditional decree of God.

Preston represents a man pulled in two directions. He was determined to maintain an orthodox view of God's decrees, but felt compelled to extend the parameters of Christ's redemption in order to justify the universal offer. Clearly, there was tension in Preston's theology. However, Preston did not accept that God's decrees and Christ's redemption somehow existed in paradox as within Amyraut's hypothetical universalism.⁴⁷ He, rather, attempted to alleviate any tension within his doctrine of redemption by embracing a hierarchical interpretation of the event of Christ's death, wherein he granted God's eternal decrees pre-eminence.

Moore's failure to acknowledge consistently the priority of God's decrees in defining Preston's doctrine of redemption leads Moore to make the incorrect assumption that for Preston the efficacy of Christ's redemption was dependent on man's response. Moore has not understood the priority of God's decrees in Preston's doctrine of redemption, and thus misunderstands the nature of condition by which

Marrow Controversy 1718-1723: An Historical and Theological Analysis (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1988), 26.

⁴⁶ Preston, *Saints Qualifications*, 23.

⁴⁷ Amyraut quite explicitly accepted that his view on Christ's redemption and his doctrine of hypothetical universalism included paradoxical elements. Preston avoided Amyraut's errors by prioritizing God's decrees over Christ's redemption, rather than supporting the notion that God's election logically and temporally followed God's decree to send Christ to save the world.

these decrees bear fruit unto salvation for the elect. This is a similar mistake to the one Baxter made hundreds of years before.⁴⁸ Preston, like Davenant, proposed a dual purpose in the redemption of Christ, hence, the separation between its accomplishment and its application. However, within the context of God's absolute decree, the gap between the accomplishment of redemption and its application is bridged not by man's response, but most fundamentally according to God's efficacious purpose and design for Christ's redemption. Preston's middle-way, like Davenant's, represents an important trend among some 17th century theologians, including Fraser, who wished to remain firmly grounded within Reformed orthodoxy, but it also affirms a real sufficiency and warrant for all sinners to seek salvation through Christ's redemption.

4.3: Moise Amyraut (1596-1664)

If Arminius' doctrine of redemption signified a rejection of High Calvinism, then Amyraut's doctrine of redemption denoted an effort to reform it.⁴⁹ According to Amyraut, biblical Calvinism needed to be unearthed from the mountains of rubbish introduced by the Calvinist scholasticism, which represented the Reformed orthodoxy of his day.⁵⁰ He believed that in the Synod of Dort's efforts to save the Protestant church from the onslaught of Arminianism, the pendulum had swung too far and had created a much too rigid interpretation of Calvinism.⁵¹ In response, Amyraut concentrated on creating a bridge between the Reformed community and

⁴⁸ Given the fundamental differences between Preston's and Baxter's understanding of the nature and aim of Christ's redemption, Baxter was not justified in claiming Preston's support for his theory of the conditional redemption of Christ.

⁴⁹ Amyraut is an example of a pupil who gained more notoriety than his mentor and teacher. Amyraut was just one of the students influenced by the Scottish theologian, John Cameron. The leading names associated with Cameron's teaching, which is generally labeled 'Amyraldianism,' were Amyraut, David Blondel, Jean Daille, and Paul Testard. Du Moulin and Rivet contended that Amyraldianism was a perversion of Cameron's form of hypothetical universalism. See, *MA*, 32. See also, Du Moulin, P., *Esclaircissement of the Controversies Salmuriennes* (Leiden: 1648), 203-205.

⁵⁰ Armstrong agrees with Amyraut's assessment of the state of Calvinism in the early 17th century, and also validated Amyraut's view of Calvin, calling him a "non-scholastic." See, *CAH*, 132. In opposition to Amyraut and many modern anti-Westminsterian theologians, Muller maintains that the scholasticism of the 17th particularists did not fundamentally alter the method and intentions of the Reformers. See, Muller, R. A., *Scholasticism and Orthodoxy in the Reformed Tradition: An Attempt at Definition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1995), 26-27.

⁵¹ Despite his objection to the Synod of Dort's scholastic Calvinism, Amyraut did affirm that his hypothetical universalism was consistent with the synod's canons, a point that was much debated by Du Moulin. See, Tait, *Pierre Du Moulin*, 162. See also, Quick's observations of Amyraut's trials in Quick, J., *Synodicon in Gallia Reformata, or, The Acts, Decisions, Decrees, and Canons of Those Famous National Councils of the Reformed Churches in France* (London: 1692), II.411.

Lutherans, who would have been offended by the Synod of Dort's inflexibility, especially in respect to its pronouncements regarding the limited extent of Christ's redemption.⁵² Klauber and Armstrong both contend that Amyraut was also determined to redefine Reformed theology in an effort to ease the mind of Catholics or those who had been newly converted from Catholicism, by lessening the emphasis on the decrees and placing greater priority on the universal love and justice of God in Christ's redemption.⁵³ Whereas many theologians leading up to Amyraut had used Reformed theology to differentiate their views from their theological opponents, Amyraut was bothered by claims that Reformed theology inevitably led to sectarianism.⁵⁴ Respectively, he sought to re-orient Calvinism away from the doctrine of the absolute decrees and towards a more inclusive doctrine of universal redemption based on God's conditional decree to save all humanity.

Amyraut supplied a significant contribution to the development of the doctrine of redemption in the 17th century. However, what exactly he taught has been somewhat obscured by modern scholars. Additionally, which of his contemporaries agreed with him is also debatable. Many historians and theologians on both sides of the Calvin versus Calvinism debate lump Amyraut's doctrine of Christ's redemption with the universalism of Davenant, Ussher, and Preston, or more accurately, include these theologians under the umbrella of hypothetical universalism. Unfortunately, this results in a forced and largely unjustified homogeneity and leads to confusion.⁵⁵ Davenant, for example, outlined his disagreement with Cameron, referring to Cameron's hypothetical universalism as a theology which is "badly expressed."⁵⁶ He personally protested Amyraut's attempts to gain British support, yet modern scholars

⁵² Lewis, S., "Moise Amyraut 1596-1664: Predestination and the Atonement Debate," *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 1 (1995): 5.

⁵³ Klauber, *The Helvetic Formula*, 106 and *CAH*, 170-171.

⁵⁴ *TIC*, 231.

⁵⁵ Clifford, A. C., *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology 1640-1790--An Evaluation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 26; *TIC*, 129; Hamilton, I., *The Erosion of Calvinist Orthodoxy: Seceders and Subscription in Scottish Presbyterianism* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1990), 59; Macleod, *Scottish Theology*, 176; Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 424; and Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly*, 350. Baxter himself grouped the middle-way of Davenant with that of Amyraut and Cameron, see, Keeble, *Calendar*, I.53 and I.96. For those who recognize the uniqueness of Amyraut's position, see, Daniels, *Hyper-Calvinism*, 528; Moore, *Christ Is Dead*, abstract and PRRD, I.77.

⁵⁶ *DDC*, 568.

are often quick to label Davenant as an Amyraldian.⁵⁷ The reason Davenant and others tend to be grouped with Amyraut is because they held a form of universal redemption while rejecting Arminianism. Subsequently, the assumption is that Amyraut's middle-way is the only middle-way. However, it is one of the assertions of this thesis that the agreement between Amyraut and the theologians who advocated a universal particularism begins and ends with a universal reference to Christ's redemption. Amyraut distinguished himself by redefining the nature of God's decrees, and thus, radically altered the orthodox understanding of God's purpose in the redemption of Christ by introducing conditionality within the mind of God.⁵⁸

Other than Arminius, all the theologians surveyed up to this point have asserted that God's elective decree was the controlling feature in either their universalism or particularism. Amyraut added a new interpretation, in which he subordinated God's elective decree to God's prior decree to send Christ as the Savior of the world.⁵⁹ According to Amyraut, God's primary purpose in sending his Son was to save all humankind without distinction. Armstrong affirms that Amyraut taught that Christ procured salvation for all in an effort to fulfill "God's will for universal salvation."⁶⁰ Amyraut argued that universal salvation was the aim of a Trinitarian endeavor. He explains,

The sacrifice that he has offered for the propitiation of their offenses
has been equally offered for all, and the salvation that he has received

⁵⁷ Fuller, M., *The Life, Letters and Writings of John Davenant, D.D., 1572-1641* (1897), 192-200.

⁵⁸ Amyraut's hypothetical universalism was based on his understanding that conditionality existed in the mind of God. He disputed the idea that conditionality was merely connected to the revealed will of God or the prescriptive will of God. See, PRRD, III.470. Muller references Amyraut, M. L. Cappell and J. Placaei, *Syntagma Thesium Theologicarum in Academia Salmuriensi Variis Temporibus Disputatarum Sub Praesidio...* (Saumur: 1665), IV.viii.2, 22.

⁵⁹ Amyraut, *Brief Treatise*, trans. by Lum, iii. Amyraut's view differed from Arminius' position, but both held to a "general reference theory" of Christ's redemption. Amyraut edged increasingly close to Arminius when he adopted the perspective that because of Christ's redemption, even those to whom the gospel was never preached, might be saved. See also, *BTP*, 180-183. Lincoln fails to recognize the primacy of the universal in Amyraut's doctrine of redemption, and thus, in contrast to the conclusions of this thesis, he suggests that the hypothetical universalists' perspective on absolute predestination was comparable to that of redemptive particularists. See, Lincoln, C. F., "The Development of the Covenant Theory," *BSac* 100 (1943): 146-147.

⁶⁰ *CAH*, 212.

from his Father to communicate to men in the sanctification of the Spirit and in glorification of the body is intended equally for all.⁶¹

Amyraut did include a qualification to this statement of God's intention to procure salvation through Christ's redemption. He writes, "...provided, I say, that the disposition necessary to receive it is in the same way equal."⁶² This was a limitation to his doctrine of redemption and an important proviso to his speculation concerning the nature of God's decrees. However, Amyraut's hypothetical universalism did not relieve the tension created by the notion that God at one point wills the salvation of all without distinction in the gift of his Son, and yet at the next moment appears to alter his intentions by limiting the application to the elect.⁶³

The friction between God's dual intentions for Christ's redemption was a logical outcome of Amyraut's doctrine of revelation. He was trying to avoid speculations regarding God's secret will, which he felt induced the scholastic Calvinists to overlook the more obvious biblical testimony of God's purpose in sending Christ. As a result, Amyraut concentrated on God's revealed will when making his pronouncements regarding God's intentions for Christ's redemption. Clifford defends Amyraut's methodology by maintaining that Calvin also focused on God's revealed will and did not believe that God's secret will in any way limited its scope.⁶⁴

Clifford is right to identify the fact that Calvin viewed God's will in two respects, one revealed and the other secret. However, unlike Amyraut, Calvin never assumed there was any hint of inconsistency within God's will even though they served two distinct purposes. According to Calvin, God's revealed will informed us how we were to think about God and what duty was required of us. On the other hand, God's secret will was that "by which he controls all things and directs them to

⁶¹ *BTP*, 78.

⁶² *BTP*, 78. Armstrong attempts to clarify Amyraut's position by emphasizing the fact that God can only be said to will universal salvation if the stipulation is fulfilled. Without the fulfillment of that stipulation, God cannot be said to will it. Nevertheless, Amyraut's contention that Christ was given even hypothetically or conditionally for the salvation of all represents a grand departure from the previous universalists examined, who do not trace the universality of Christ's redemption back to the will of God to save all humankind. See, *CAH*, 212.

⁶³ Lum recognizes this as the great unresolved tension in Amyraut's theology, a tension which Amyraut never resolved. See, Amyraut, *Brief Treatise*, trans. By Lum, iii.

⁶⁴ Clifford, *Calvinus*, 12-13 and 63.

their end.”⁶⁵ According to Calvin’s doctrine of revelation, Amyraut employed an inverted methodology, which resulted in an unnecessary discrepancy in God’s purpose in sending Christ. There was no requirement for Amyraut to ground his universal offer on God’s will to save all men. If Amyraut were more faithful to Calvin, he would have discovered that God’s revealed will provides all that is needed for warranted belief without peering into the secret purposes of God.⁶⁶ Additionally, he would also have embraced Calvin’s position that Christ was the executor of the decree of election, not the cause of it.⁶⁷

The juxtaposition between God’s revealed will and his secret will further manifested itself in the form of a discrepancy within the economic Trinity. According to Amyraut, the Father acted in the role as Lawgiver, not as Savior, when determining to send his Son. Since the Father was simply acting in accordance with law, Christ’s redemption could not be understood to carry with it the means by which salvation was appropriated.⁶⁸ Christ’s satisfaction was made for the salvation of humankind, but only according to the law, which means that Christ’s redemption carried with it the stipulation or condition of belief in order for salvation actually to be applied.⁶⁹ The benefits of Christ’s redemption were *in suspeno* until the conditions were fulfilled.⁷⁰ The conditional nature of Christ’s redemption necessarily resulted in a radical separation between the accomplishment and application of redemption. Amyraut’s conception of the conditional nature of God’s decrees in the context of the law found its more complete expression in Richard Baxter’s neonomianism

Amyraut’s hypothetical universalism was not an accurate representation of Calvin’s position on Christ’s redemption. Whether or not Calvin affirmed the

⁶⁵ *Institutes*, III.20.43. See also, I.17.3; III.24.17.

⁶⁶ *CAH*, 177.

⁶⁷ *CAH*, 221.

⁶⁸ *CAH*, 209.

⁶⁹ This position should be contrasted with the more widely accepted orthodox Reformed belief that it was the intention of all persons of the Trinity to accomplish as well as to apply Christ’s work of redemption for the salvation of those elected by God. Thus, though the act of redemption is separated from the application of redemption, there remains an absolute connection between Christ’s act of redemption and its efficacy to save.

⁷⁰ *CAH*, 210. One of the contentions made by Du Moulin and Amyraut’s other accusers at the Synod of Alençon was that Amyraut misinterpreted the nature and order of God’s decrees, and thus introduced a chronological priority or historical sequence to redemption in God’s mind. See, 60 and 211. See also, Lewis, *Moise Amyraut*, 6.

universal extent of Christ's redemption, there are too many other and more foundational elements missing from Amyraut's expression of Calvinism in order for him to be considered Calvin's spokesman in the 17th century. Calvin taught the need for union with Christ through a personal application of Christ's redemption, but he did not trace the need for application to God's conditional decrees. According to Calvin, God's decrees were absolute and the primary factor in determining the design and effect of Christ's redemption, and therefore, the distinction between accomplishment and application was merely the difference between eternal and existential realities, in an example of God's purposes *in suspeno*. Calvin recognized that Christ's redemption was aimed at satisfying the Lawgiver, but was also a deliberate act of God to send Christ as Savior. He, therefore, did not indicate that the decree of election was subordinated to the revealed will to save all humankind; rather, Christ's redemption was the vehicle by which God's elective purposes were brought to fruition. Consequently, Amyraut's doctrine of redemption represented a radical departure from both Calvin and the Reformed orthodoxy of his day, not because of his universalism, but because of his suggestion that God's decree to save was conditional and the benefits of Christ's redemption were wholly separated from his purpose in dying.

4.4: Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

Baxter was well-known by his contemporaries for his controversial views on justification, while his doctrine of universal redemption received relatively little attention.⁷¹ J.I. Packer explains, however, that Baxter's understanding of justification was rooted in his non-particularist interpretation of "the distinction between the *impetration* and *application* of redemption."⁷² If Packer is correct, then Baxter's

⁷¹ Fraser did not challenge Baxter's doctrine of universal redemption directly, partly because he, too, was a universalist. More fundamental differences, however, remained. Fraser employed Owen's logic against Baxter in order to demonstrate the absolute purposes and effectual application of Christ's redemption. See *JF*, 252 and *JFSF*, 234. Fraser denied that Christ's work of redemption merely provided a "naked absolute sufficiency," but rather was aimed at securing the salvation of the elect. *JF*, 12. For Owen's critique of Baxter, see, Owen, J., *Of the Death of Christ* (London: Peter Cole, 1650), 2 and Owen, J., *Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu: Or The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (Edinburgh: Hamilton, Balfour, and Neill, 1755), v-vi, xi, xiv and xviii. Significant to the historical development of the controversy surrounding Fraser's doctrine of redemption, is the fact that Gib wrote the introduction to this 1755 edition of Owen's treatise on *The Death of Death*, identifying Owen's arguments as directly refuting Fraser.

⁷² Packer, J. I., *The Redemption & Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter: A Study in Puritan Theology* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 183.

explanation of for whom and for what Christ died should not be ignored nor separated from examinations of his more popular doctrine of justification. A re-evaluation of Baxter's key presuppositions concerning Christ's redemption will show the development of this contested view of justification.

Before examining Baxter's doctrine of Christ's redemption, a better grasp is needed of those who influenced the development of Baxter's ideas. Packer remarks that Baxter's power as a theologian was his ability to synthesize traditional Reformed positions in new and experimental ways.⁷³ Baxter drew from a variety of theologians for inspiration. For example, he openly corresponded with Amyraut and has been called "the Amyraut of England," though he denied he was dependent on Amyraut or Cameron for his views on the purpose and extent of Christ's redemption.⁷⁴ Like Amyraut, Baxter sought credibility for his non-particularist teachings by appealing to Calvin.⁷⁵ Additionally, Baxter affirmed his agreement with the conclusions drawn by the Synod of Dort and Bishop Davenant.⁷⁶ Others have pointed out the similarities between Baxter's universalism and the so-called "governmental" theory propounded by Hugo Grotius.⁷⁷ Muller, on the other hand, claims that both Baxter's great knowledge of the scholastics and his direct acknowledgement of Pierre D'Ailly indicate the immediate source of his theory of redemption.⁷⁸ The truth is that Baxter's theology evolved throughout his ministry, which illustrates that there was

⁷³ RR, 183. Part of Baxter's motivation for this synthesis was his pastoral focus. He was not content to leave theology in the abstract; therefore, he sought new means to convey the Scriptures in a more practical manner.

⁷⁴ Daniels, *Hyper-Calvinism*, 531. For a record of Baxter's correspondence with and affirmation of Amyraut, see, Keeble, *Calendar*, I.53, I.96, I.101, II.118, II.135, and II.196-197. Baxter's views on Christ's redemption were very similar to those held by Amyraut and Cameron, particularly his understanding of the nature of God's decretive will concerning Christ's redemption. The correlation between Amyraut and Baxter's doctrine of universal redemption serves to distance Fraser's views from Amyraut, given that Fraser so passionately rejected Baxter's proposed conditionality.

⁷⁵ Baxter, *Catholic Theology*, II.51. See also, *Atonement*, 28.

⁷⁶ Baxter, R., *Rich: Baxter's Confession of His Faith, Especially Concerning the Interest of Repentance and Sincere Obedience to Christ, in Our Justification and Sanctification* (London: R.W., 1654), Table of Contents. See also, Baxter, R., *Of Saving Faith* (London: R.W., 1658), 85. Baxter recognized the excellence of the Westminster Confession of Faith, but did not subscribe to it.

⁷⁷ Muller, R. A., "Covenant and Conscience in English Reformed Theology: Three Variations on a 17th Century Theme," *WTJ* 42 (1980): 331.

⁷⁸ Muller, "Covenant," 331. Baxter identified Petrus de Alliaco, Cardinal Cameracensem in the margin of *Catholic Theology*. See, Baxter, *Catholic Theology*, II.iii.50-53.

not just one person but many contributors to the development of his theory of Christ's redemption.

The multiplicity of sources from which Baxter drew when forming his thoughts on the doctrine of redemption serves to reinforce the need for careful analysis. It has already been demonstrated how unhelpful and frequently unjustified it is when scholars assume that generic labels are sufficiently precise. Not all middle-ways are the same. For example, although Baxter unapologetically promoted universal redemption, his brand of universalism was fundamentally incongruent with Fraser's and significantly distinct from Davenant's. On the other hand, Baxter's perspective on Christ's redemption was largely agreeable with Amyraut's theory.

The controlling element and one of the distinguishing aspects in Baxter's doctrine of universal redemption was his understanding of God's purpose in Christ's redemption.⁷⁹ Like Amyraut, Baxter maintained that neither the Son nor the Father distinguished between the elect and the reprobate in Christ's redemption.⁸⁰ The absence of partiality, therefore, forms the basis of Baxter's universalism. It is important to note that according to Baxter all members of the Trinity were in agreement that whatever action was performed and whatever benefit Christ merited was merited for all humankind, without distinction. In agreement with both Amyraut and Reformed orthodoxy, Baxter condemned the notion that all humans were actually saved through Christ's redemption. Thus, he rejected the idea that Christ's redemption was somehow connected with the doctrine of universal salvation. Baxter did not stop there. He distanced himself from Reformed orthodoxy when he denied that anyone was actually saved through Christ's redemption. Furthermore, he also abandoned Amyraut's hypothetical, claiming that it was never God's purpose to save through Christ's redemption.⁸¹ Therefore, according to Baxter, Christ's redemption was only an initial gift of God's grace.⁸² Christ's redemption was not an illustration

⁷⁹ Martin, *Puritanism*, 136.

⁸⁰ *URM*, 36. Baxter understood, unlike Amyraut, that if Christ was sent conditionally, then God did not decree to save all. In this respect, Baxter pulls Amyraut back to the more logical, yet more Arminian-friendly, position that Christ purchased universal grace through his work of redemption.

⁸¹ *URM*, 36.

⁸² This was not based on the notion of an insufficiency in Christ's redemption, but the limited design and purpose of his dying.

of the culmination of God's efforts to save, but only a preliminary step towards salvation.

Rather than securing salvation, the benefit of Christ's redemption, according to Baxter, was the suspension of God's wrath for man's failure to fulfill the demands of the first covenant and God's gracious provision of a new, relaxed covenant.⁸³ 'Satisfaction' is the term that Baxter employed to highlight the suspension of God's wrath. By limiting the scope of Christ's redemption to this one-sided understanding of satisfaction, Baxter deviated from how Reformed orthodoxy would use the term 'satisfaction.' The classical Reformed understanding not only includes a suspension from the wrath due for law breaking, but also a positive satisfaction of the righteousness required for salvation. According to Baxter, however, Christ's redemption satisfied the demands of the previous law, but did not provide an unequivocal satisfaction of all that God will ever require.⁸⁴ Thus, Baxter argued that the new covenant, the covenant of grace, demanded personal satisfaction through faith and sincere obedience in addition to Christ's satisfaction.⁸⁵

Baxter's notion of Christ's limited satisfaction became one of the focal points of Owen's challenge to Baxter's doctrine of redemption. Owen disputed the idea that one could separate Christ's fulfillment of the covenant of works, the law, and the covenant of grace in his death.⁸⁶ Owen declared the only conceivable way that one could justifiably conclude God's law was relaxed was in relation to the person who suffered, not in terms of the penalty suffered.⁸⁷ According to Owen, God's law was unchangeable once it was established. It required absolute righteousness and offered

⁸³ *URM*, 23.

⁸⁴ *URM*, 26.

⁸⁵ The Marrowmen of the 18th century associated Baxter's notion of incomplete satisfaction or merit with the plague of legalism that ran through their era. In his doctoral research done the Marrowman, James Hog of Carnock, Moffat goes so far as to argue that the rise of Baxterianism was the chief cause of the Marrow controversy. See, Moffat, C. L., "James Hog of Carnock (1658-1734), Leader in the Evangelical Party in Early Eighteenth Century Scotland" (Ph.D., University of Edinburgh, 1960), 243. The discussions cited in the General Assembly records seem to support this. It was the stated goal of the Marrowmen and the Assembly that they dispel any notion of "*Legalism and Baxterianism*." See, *Act of the General Assembly, Concerning a Book, Entitled, The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (Edinburgh: 1720), 158.

⁸⁶ Owen argued that the aim of Christ's satisfaction was deliverance from sin. If Christ only accomplished the suspension of wrath and the conditional gift of life, then he failed to satisfy the demands of the law and his redemption is ultimately worthless. See, *ODC*, 15.

⁸⁷ *ODC*, 16-19.

absolute deliverance. The fulfillment of the law was a matter of all or nothing. It was impossible to secure a legal and universal righteousness and leave the evangelical and particular righteousness which saves hanging on the contingency of subjective application.⁸⁸

Baxter attempted to define God's law and Christ's satisfaction in such a way that the demands of righteousness remained even after Christ's payment. This meant that the requirements of the covenant were relaxed, but salvation was not secured. Consequently, Baxter wholly opposed the view that Christ's redemption was the cause of salvation. Baxter maintained that "Christ did not purchase further benefits *Loco nostro*, though he suffered Punishment *Loco nostro*."⁸⁹ Christ, according to Baxter, suffered for mankind's sin but the demand for obedience remained unfulfilled.⁹⁰ Salvation, therefore, was principally equated with an individual's willingness to accomplish the secondary conditions stipulated in the new covenant.⁹¹ Baxter's theory that Christ only procured a conditional gift of life for the elect was foreign to most of his Reformed contemporaries.⁹²

Contrary to Baxter's notion that Christ secured a conditional gift of life and proposed a conditional covenant of grace, the orthodox Reformed position stated that Christ secured an absolute covenant, which conveyed absolute promises to the elect. Many of Baxter's Reformed contemporaries limited the scope of the covenant of grace to the elect, yet the promises attached to the covenant, including the conditions for fulfillment, were pledged in total because they had been secured in total through Christ's redemption. Muller explains that the conventional Reformed understanding of the covenant of grace, included: a Redeemer is sent, salvation is promised to the

⁸⁸ Moffat, *James Hog*, 231-232.

⁸⁹ *URM*, 35.

⁹⁰ Baxter, R., *A Treatise of Justifying Righteousness* (London: Princes-Arms and Golden-Lion, 1676), 58. Muller delineates the implications of Baxter's acceptance of the Scotist concept of an *acceptilatio* of obedience in place of the more traditionally Reformed opinion that Christ paid the full price of salvation. See, Muller, *Covenant and Conscience*, 331.

⁹¹ Baxter emphasized the will or the actualization of faith. Thus, he distinguished himself from Amyraut who emphasizes knowledge or understanding as the origin of faith. Armstrong explains, "By stressing that all choice is an act of the understanding Amyraut regards the act of faith as properly an operation of the understanding, not of the will. He defines faith, as had Cameron, as a certain *persuasio*. But since persuasion comes not by force, but by apprehending the beneficial qualities of the object under consideration, by recognizing a good reason for accepting an object, the rationality of the act of faith is underlined." *CAH*, 243.

⁹² Edwards, T., *Baxterianism Barefac'd* (1699), 95.

Son, and salvation is applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died.⁹³ As a result, Reformed orthodoxy endorsed the causal link between Christ's accomplishment of redemption and the benefit of salvation for the elect that resulted from his redemptive work.

Baxter refused to accept the causal link between the accomplishment of redemption and its application for salvation. He insisted that the benefits of Christ's redemption were limited merely to a stay of execution in respect to God's wrath and to a conditional offer of salvation. Thus, Baxter subordinated pardon to faith.⁹⁴ In other words, faith was no longer a benefit received from God's pardon, but a means of receiving pardon.⁹⁵ Pardon, therefore, was only remotely linked to Christ's redemption. Baxter taught that pardon was a benefit of Christ as *jus Dominii*, a status to which Christ was not promoted until after his death.⁹⁶ The delay of pardon highlights a detachment within the offices of Christ. Christ died as God's Priest, according to Baxter, but not with the rights as God's King.⁹⁷ He made a payment for all, but guaranteed salvation to none. Christ only received the right to grant salvation as a result of his work of redemption.⁹⁸ Baxter agreed with Cameron and Amyraut that Christ's redemption, therefore, was merely a step towards election, not an act grounded in God's electing decrees.⁹⁹

⁹³ Muller, *Covenant and Conscience*, 328.

⁹⁴ According to Baxter, the subjective application of Christ's blood by the believer was the defining factor of its efficacy. See, *AJ*, 94.

⁹⁵ *ODC*, 25.

⁹⁶ *URM*, 42. One of the presuppositions of Baxter's universalism was the notion that he understood God's grace to be more widely spread through Christ's redemption, than those who defended a Particularist position. Despite the gesture of universal grace through universal redemption, Baxter was still bound by his Calvinistic convictions to limit the application of redemption by God's sovereign choice. In short, Baxter simply limits the scope of Christ's kingly pardon and priestly intercession rather than locating the limitation in Christ's purpose in redemption. The end result, however, is the same. Only those sovereignly elected receive the gift of salvation, irrespective of whether election was the primary or secondary decree.

⁹⁷ Baxter included both the priestly and kingly offices of Christ as part of his doctrine of justification. He asserted that it was not enough to trust in the Priest who died, because it is only the King who is able to save us from the reign of sin. Thus, the priesthood and kingship of Christ served to justify Baxter's view that the covenant demands both faith and sincere obedience. See, Baxter, *Of Saving Faith*, 33.

⁹⁸ *ODC*, 92.

⁹⁹ As a consequence of his views on Christ's *jus Dominii*, Baxter also taught that the elect are simultaneously given both the right to justification and the possession of it. See, Edwards, *Baxterianism*, 30.

Baxter's doctrine of universal redemption appears to be more appropriately defined as a middle-way between Arminianism and hypothetical universalism, than a middle-way between Arminianism and Calvinism. Whereas Amyraut's hypothetical universalism introduced a logical inconsistency between the purposes of God the Son and the purposes of God the Father, Baxter embraced the more logically consistent position that neither God the Father nor God the Son ever intended to save anyone through the work of redemption. This implied a greater step towards Arminianism because Baxter assumed that salvation was depended on an individual's willingness to accept God's covenantal terms and fulfill them by personal faith and sincere obedience. He retained his link with hypothetical universalism by subordinating the decree of election to the conditional decree of redemption. However, he tweaked Amyraut's conception of God's conditional decree, arguing that conditionality appeared as a part of God's design rather than as a deduction from his hypothetical decree to save all humankind. Consequently, Baxter utterly denied the causal link between God's intentions in the redemption of Christ and predestination.¹⁰⁰ Christ's redemption was merely a preliminary step towards the salvation of the elect. Hence, Baxter's teaching that Christ's redemption was utterly divorced from God's intention to save, and that God's election was *in suspenso* until after Christ's redemption, served not only to separate him from Calvin and the Reformed orthodoxy of his day, it also distinguished him from most of the universal absolutists or particularists, including Fraser.

4.5: John Owen (1616-1683)

The significance of John Owen's contribution to the development of the doctrine of redemption in the Post-Reformation period is uncontested. In 1647, He published *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, the definitive work defending the doctrine of limited and purposeful redemption in Christ's death.¹⁰¹ Writing just a few years after the Westminster Assembly began, Owen's chief aim was to preserve the orthodox, Reformed position that Christ's redemption included both the provision to

¹⁰⁰ Martin, *Puritanism*, 136.

¹⁰¹ Rather than quoting from one of the earlier editions of *Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu: Or The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, I have chosen to use the 1755 republication because there is an introduction by Adam Gib, wherein he specifically addresses and seeks to defeat several of Fraser's arguments using Owen's logic. Ironically, Fraser identified Owen as his ally against Baxter in his efforts to defend the absolute nature of the covenant of grace and to maintain the efficacy of Christ's redemption for the salvation of the elect.

make people fit for God as well as to draw them unto himself.¹⁰² He challenged all who denied his fundamental aim, including both those who promoted the Arminian doctrine of the general reference theory of Christ's death and those, like Amyraut and Baxter, who taught that Christ's redemption was universal in respect to God's conditional decree.

Owen's statements were met with a response from Baxter in his work *Aphorismes of Justification* (1649), in which Baxter attempted to defend his convictions that Christ's redemption established a conditional covenant based on God's conditional decree. This in turn compelled Owen to follow up his seminal work with the treatise entitled, *Of the Death of Christ, The Price He Paid* (1650), wherein he specifically applied his earlier conclusions to Baxter's doctrine of justification and redemption.¹⁰³ *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* and *Of the Death of Christ* not only played a pivotal role in the historical developments regarding the doctrine of redemption, but, for the purpose of this thesis, they also factor heavily into how Fraser defined his position in opposition to Baxter's neonomianism. Fraser, though supporting a broader interpretation of Christ's redemption, identified Owen as an ally because of his unwavering support for the absolute nature of God's covenant and the efficacy of Christ's redemption to save the elect.

Owen carefully argued his point. On the one hand, he identified and affirmed the key elements in his opponents' theories. On the other hand, he challenged the reliability of their claims. For example, Owen responded to his theological antagonists' assertions that the doctrine of universal redemption was the only option for those who wished to exalt the infinite worth of Christ's redemption by attempting to demonstrate that not only did the doctrine of redemptive particularism preserve the infinite worth of Christ's death, but it offered a more consistent alternative. He declared that the internal worth of Christ's sacrifice qualified the nature of his obedience and allowed him to meet the stipulations of God's justice perfectly.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² *DD*, 2.

¹⁰³ *ODC*, 2. Baxter continued the argument in his *Confession of Faith* (1655). Owen, then, countered Baxter with an article entitled "Of the death of Christ and of justification" in the appendix of Owen, J., *Vindiciae Evangelicae or, The Mystery of the Gospell Vindicated, and Socianianisme Examined* (Oxford: Leon Lichfield, 1655).

¹⁰⁴ *DD*, 3A.

With respect to the value of Christ's death, therefore, Owen insisted that Christ's redemption was both universally and perfectly sufficient to meet the needs of ten worlds.¹⁰⁵

Owen did not recognize the existence of a hypothetical or conditional element in God's design for Christ's redemption. He accepted the possibility that God could have opted to extend Christ's redemption to all people without distinction but chose to restrict its scope to the elect alone.¹⁰⁶ Thus, he denied any form of conditionality in God's decrees, but he acknowledged when considering Christ's redemption materially, without respect to God's intentions for redemption, that the infinitude of Christ's person hypothetically and sufficiently established the means by which God could have redeemed ten worlds. Nevertheless, Owen declared that by creating a conditional purpose in Christ's redemption hypothetical universalists challenged the efficacy of God's decrees and detracted from the glory of Christ's redemption. He, therefore, concluded that Christ was most glorified by a redemption that not only upheld the infinite worth of the sacrifice offered but also defended the fact that Christ's redemption actually and causally led some to salvation.¹⁰⁷

Another point of dispute for Owen was the claim by his adversaries that if one desired to have Christ as the immediate object of faith, then one must advance some form of universality. He did not presuppose there to any inconsistency between holding the doctrine of particular redemption and also recognizing that Jesus Christ himself was the object of faith and not God's eternal decrees. As a matter of fact, he turned around his opponents' arguments. He stated that to declare that "Christ died for you" actually reorients the focus of the gospel call away from the person of Christ and towards the purpose of Christ.¹⁰⁸ Owen contested that the purpose of the Redeemer was not clearly delineated in the Scriptures for every individual personally; this only occurs at the moment of believing. He encouraged his readers to focus on the work of Christ on the cross, not the purpose of the worker.¹⁰⁹ Christ's

¹⁰⁵ Owen employed the term "universal" not only in relation to the extent of Christ's redemption but also with respect to the completeness of it to fulfill all the law's demands. See, Owen, J., *Mediations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ, in His Person, Office, and Grace* (London: B.A., 1691), 85.

¹⁰⁶ *DD*, 189.

¹⁰⁷ *DD*, 190, 349.

¹⁰⁸ *DD*, 189.

¹⁰⁹ Owen, J., *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Through the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ, Explained, Confirmed, & Vindicated* (London: 1677), 118, 120.

intentions to save were veiled and “not for thee, poor stagger, to question.”¹¹⁰ Owen explained sinners must remain focused on the infinite payment provided rather than attempting to peer into the secret intentions of God. The gospel offer was an offer of provision and a promise inviting any who would come, not a proclamation of God’s secret purposes.¹¹¹ Thus, the doctrine of particular redemption did not eliminate the reality of the universal offer of Christ as crucified.

Like those who opposed his doctrine of redemptive particularism, Owen recognized the need for Christ’s redemption to be personalized. He understood that no one was immediately saved by Christ’s redemption. In other words, Christ’s redemption did not *ipso facto* imply salvation. Owen explained that “deliverance from death is not immediate or absolute, nor by his Death alone, but by that as a Price.”¹¹² Owen, however, acknowledged a causal link between Christ’s redemption and salvation but did not presume that Christ’s redemption constituted an immediate unilateral action to save. This meant that a personal application of Christ’s work of mediation was necessary for personal salvation.¹¹³ Owen clarified the fact that faith alone conveyed a personal right to the effects of God’s love in redemption.¹¹⁴ Conversely, no one receives the personal right to the benefits of Christ’s redemption prior to accepting the gospel offer. According to Owen, Baxter was justified in refuting the Antinomian doctrine of eternal justification, which radically minimized the subjective experience of justification. Owen, however, contended that universal and conditional redemption was not the best alternative to Antinomian errors because it simply introduced another largely impersonal interpretation of Christ’s redemption.

¹¹⁰ Owen, J., *The Steadfastness of Promises, and the Sinfulness of Staggering* (London: Peter Cole, 1650), 30.

¹¹¹ Owen writes, “The End for which the Lord Christ in the Work of his Mediation is the Ordinance of God, and as such proposed in the Promises of the Gospel, namely, the Recovery and Salvation of lost sinners, belongs unto the Object of Faith as Justifying.” Owen, J., *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Through the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ, Explained, Confirmed, & Vindicated* (London: 1677), 119.

¹¹² ODC, 83. Owen not only rejected Baxter’s position that one’s justification is dependent upon his ability to fulfill the new law established by the new covenant, but he also objected to the notion of eternal justification propagated by both hyper-Calvinists and Antinomians, who minimized the role of faith, defining it as merely the acknowledgement of one’s justified status.

¹¹³ Owen, J., *Gospel Grounds and Evidences of the Faith of God’s Elect* (London: John Astwood, 1645), 4.

¹¹⁴ According to Owen, faith was indeed a condition of justification. The condition, however, only exists on the human level, not in the mind of God, since God determined that the single action of Christ’s redemption would provide for both the means and the end of salvation. See, *DD*, 90.

Owen argued that his understanding of redemption maximized the personal relationship between the redeemed and the Redeemer. Christ's redemption was personal, not conditional. He determined to die for a certain group of people. Not only to die for them, but also to procure the gift of faith for them so that they might actually experience the full benefits of Christ's redemption.¹¹⁵

The crux of Owen's argument was that the personal nature of Christ's redemption went hand in hand with the purposeful nature of Christ's redemption. Accordingly, it was not the value of Christ's satisfaction which determined the scope and how the benefits of his redemption would be applied because, as we have already noted, they were infinite in accordance with the sacrifice offered. The governing factor of Christ's redemption was "Gods *free Constitution* of them to such an End."¹¹⁶ God's decree was the foundation of Christ's redemption.¹¹⁷ There was unity among the persons of the Trinity, a unity which was confirmed by a covenant between the Father and the Son.¹¹⁸ The covenant of grace, according to Owen, was the evidence of an agreement as to the nature of the offer and the aim of that which was offered.¹¹⁹ This was not a one-sided or conditional covenant which simply provided a legal satisfaction, but a covenant which guaranteed Christ's whole satisfaction as a payment, which in turn would merit the gift of faith and everlasting life to the elect.¹²⁰

It was Owen's assumption that the causal link between Christ's redemption and salvation would result in the sinner's greater assurance of God's acceptance.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Owen explains, "He [God] is *atoned appeased, actually reconciled*, at peace with those for whom Christ died, and in due time for his sake will bestow upon them all the Fruits, and Issues of Love, and renewed Friendship." *ODC*, 53.

¹¹⁶ *ODC*, 14 and 24.

¹¹⁷ Owen, J., *The Principles of the Doctrine of Christ: Unfolded in Two Short Catechismes* (London: R. Cotes, 1645), 33.

¹¹⁸ *DD*, 60.

¹¹⁹ Owen, J., *The Works of the Late Reverend and Learned John Owen, D.D.* (London: 1721), 44.

¹²⁰ Owen went into great detail in order to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the categories of satisfaction, payment, and merit. He did this in deliberate contrast to the universalists, who sought to differentiate each of these elements of redemption. See, *ODC*, 15, 29, 50, and 71-72; *The Principles*, 33-34; *DD*, 32-33 and 41.

¹²¹ Amyraut and Baxter assumed the exact opposite. They presupposed that the limited extent of Christ's redemption, regardless of its efficacy, would lead sinners into the despairing challenge of seeking to uncover the secret decrees of God. Alternately, they proposed a conditional covenant of grace, thereby embracing the notion that Christ's redemption was limited in its efficacy but universal in its application. See, *CAH*, 210.

Christ's redemption meant that salvation was secured, not by a person's ability to fulfill the stipulations of any law, but by the infinite worth of Christ's work. The gospel, therefore, was the announcement of God's pledge of fidelity to his promises for any sinner who wished to come.¹²² It was a declaration that God's covenant carried with it real benefits. According to Owen, the absolute nature of the covenant of grace warranted confidence because its fulfillment was the basis of the trustworthiness of the Promiser, not the conditional response of the recipient to the promises.¹²³

Owen clarified and solidified the Reformed position on particular redemption. He became the benchmark for those wishing to challenge the doctrine. He sought to demonstrate that the doctrine of particular redemption did not exclude a passion to exalt the sacrifice of Christ. Owen was convinced he had successfully defended the orthodox Reformed position of particular redemption against the threat of Arminian and Baxterian innovations, and he had safeguarded the primacy of God's purposes in Christ's redemption while also praising the infinite worth of Christ's redemption. Additionally, he acknowledged that Christ must be foremost in the minds and hearts of believers by arguing that Christ was the immediate object of faith. He appealed to the personal nature of Christ's redemption, claiming that the purposeful nature of Christ's redemption was the only basis of confidence and security for God's people. He argued that a conditional covenant based on a conditional decree was not enough to constitute the personal nature of Christ's redemption. Accordingly, he attempted to represent the doctrine of particular redemption as an illustration of his caring, pastoral theology, not an example of an impersonal, scholastic abstraction.¹²⁴

It was Owen's pastoral tone and his arguments for the purposeful nature of Christ's redemption that greatly influenced Fraser. Although not embracing the limited scope of Christ's redemption in the same way that Owen did, Fraser appreciated the correspondence between the personal and purposeful nature of Christ's redemption. He agreed with Owen's conclusion that Baxter's neonomianism

¹²² Owen, *The Stedfastness of Promises*, 22.

¹²³ Owen, *The Stedfastness of Promises*, 17-18.

¹²⁴ It is accurate to describe Owen as a scholastic theologian. He diligently and precisely employed complex syllogisms throughout his arguments. However, the content, character and aim of his writing were pastoral in nature.

and doctrine of the conditional covenant of grace undermined a sinner's confidence in the sufficiency of Christ to save. Fraser reasoned that there could be nothing more impersonal than a conditional covenant of grace based on a conditional decree. Hence, he passionately defended Owen's argument, which grounded Christ's redemption in God's absolute decrees and his unconditional covenant.¹²⁵

4.6: Westminster Confession of Faith (1649)

The Westminster Assembly was commissioned by Parliament "to reform the government and liturgy of the Church of England and to vindicate and clear its doctrines from false aspersions."¹²⁶ However, its mission was quickly expanded to include the development of a common church government, form of public worship, and set of doctrinal standards, which would be used to unite the three kingdoms in Britain. Disagreements were inevitable with such a massive undertaking. One of the most controversial points debated at the Assembly concerned the proper interpretation of Christ's redemption.¹²⁷ On the one hand, there were those, like Rutherford, Durham, and Goodwin, who unapologetically defended the doctrine of particular redemption, while on the other hand, there were men, like Arrowsmith, Calamy, Reynolds, Seaman and Vines, who promoted a more moderate form of Calvinism.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Fraser augmented Owen's understanding of the extent of Christ's redemption to include a universal element, and therefore, also ultimately expanded the effects of redemption beyond the scope of the elect. However, neither the broadened extent of Christ's redemption nor the broadened benefits of redemption implied any form of conditionality in the purpose of God or relinquishing of the efficacy of Christ's redemptive efforts. See, *JF*, 252. Fraser understood the importance of "second causes." He accepted the truth of statements like that from Shepard who stated, "The fact that God's eternal decree is carried out through secondary causes makes it possible for God's absolute, unconditional promise to be apprehended through conditional promises." See, Chalker, W. H., "Calvin and Some Seventeenth Century English Calvinists: A Comparison of Their Thought Through an Examination of Their Doctrines of the Knowledge of God, Faith, and Assurance" (Ph.D., Duke University, 1961), 160.

¹²⁶ Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly*, 179-180.

¹²⁷ Warfield, *The Making of the Westminster Confession*, 273-274.

¹²⁸ Twisse and Baillie are also often mentioned among the moderate Calvinists as the Assembly. It is outside the parameters of this thesis to debate who was and was not a moderate when it came to the doctrine of redemption. When referring to the Westminsterian doctrine of redemption, therefore, attention will be directed chiefly towards the Standards produced by the Assembly and not the deliberations which took place to produce the Standards. Neither Van Dixhoorn nor Mitchell records any Divine appealing to Amyraut or Saumur in defense of their understanding of Christ's redemption. There are similarities between the views held by Calamy, Seaman, and especially Vines and those held by advocates of hypothetical universalism, but there are other aspects of their theology that line up perfectly with other particularists. Gillespie links the moderate Westminster divines with Cameron and Amyraut, yet they respond by affirming their commitment to God's special election in Christ's

Theologians and historians who have studied the Westminster Assembly regularly either ignore the disputes regarding the doctrine of redemption or they simply assume that the two positions were fundamentally incompatible. Both responses are unjustified and forfeit an opportunity to analyze properly how advocates of these positions interacted and the conclusions they agreed to draw. This section will briefly examine how these two groups were able to debate and disagree, yet ultimately find common ground on the doctrine of redemption. The discussions that took place at the Westminster Assembly are important in the development of the doctrine of redemption because they challenge us to reconsider the affinity between the doctrine of particular redemption and the doctrine of universal redemption.¹²⁹ Not only are the struggles at the Assembly helpful in discerning the evolution of the doctrine of redemption within the Post-Reformation period, they will provide a context for evaluating why Fraser most often quoted Westminster particularists in defense of his argument and how he rationalized the claim that his doctrine of universal redemption was essentially compatible with the Westminster Standards.

The threat of Arminianism forced those present at the Assembly to search diligently for a common ground on the doctrine of redemption.¹³⁰ All refuted Arminius' notion of the general reference theory of Christ's death. Accordingly, the

redemption. See, Van Dixhoorn, *Reforming*, Appendix VI, 200-211 and Mitchell, *Minutes*, lv-lx, 152-156.

¹²⁹ When attempting to categorize a theologian's understanding of Christ's redemption, scholars often, and unfortunately, limit the discussions to whether the theologian is a redemptive universalist or a redemptive particularist. Moderate Calvinists intended to bridge the gap between these two categories by developing a *via media*, yet this thesis contends not all *via medias* are the same. Thus, restricting discussion to the extent of Christ's redemption or stopping the evaluation once a *via media* is recognized is not a productive means by which to determine the orthodoxy of these theologians. Essential to an accurate interpretation of the various and competing *via media* theories is one's understanding of the nature and order of God's decrees. For example, Calamy, who is often identified as both a moderate and one who is sympathetic to hypothetical universalism, asserted that his form of universality "did not intrude upon either the doctrine of special election or special grace." See, Mitchell, *Minutes*, 152. If his claims were true, then Calamy's reputation as a hypothetical universalist should be called into question.

¹³⁰ In the 1590s, Protestant churches in Europe held to a predominately Calvinistic soteriology. Despite attempts by the Arminians to challenge Calvinism's reign, it remained firmly rooted. Beginning in the 1620s, it was a different story. People's Calvinistic convictions began to waver. Tyacke argues that Laud's appointment to the highest post of the Church of England represented a drastic shift in the king's sympathies towards Arminianism. He refers to Laud as a "passionate Anti-Calvinist." See, Tyacke, *Aspects*, 157, 166-169. See also, Reid, J., *The Memoirs of the Westminster Divines* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), xvii-xviii. White challenges Tyacke's position, claiming that there is very little evidence to connect Laud with Arminianism. See, White, *Predestination*, 311.

Divines affirmed that Christ died with the intention to save some, rather than merely making salvation possible for all. Furthermore, both universal redemptionists and limited redemptionists contended that Christ's intentions to save were absolutely efficacious. Therefore, the consensus of the Assembly was not only to reject Arminianism, but also to disassociate itself from Amyraut's hypothetical decree to save all people without distinction.¹³¹ For example, Calamy taught a doctrine of universal redemption wherein he understood Christ to have died absolutely for the elect and conditionally for the reprobate, language with which the traditional particularists wholly disapproved.¹³² However, the Westminster moderates avowed their agreement with the Synod of Dort and the other Divines, claiming that any notion of universality in Christ's redemption flowed from the infinite material sufficiency of Christ's redemption, not a conditionality in God's decree to save the elect.¹³³

All validated the priority of God's purposes in the redemption of Christ. The Assembly unanimously upheld the conviction that God's elective decree took precedence in the doctrine of redemption. This paved the path to synthesis in the Confession and also established a gauge for measuring an individual's orthodoxy, not based on his understanding of the extent of Christ's redemption, but more fundamentally the purpose and efficacy of Christ's redemption. Warfield explains,

The Assembly intended to state in this clause with adequate clearness their reasoned and deliberate conviction that the decree of election lies

¹³¹ Mitchell, *Minutes*, lvi and 152. Rutherford cites Amyraut during his condemnation of the doctrine of universal redemption. See, Rutherford, S., *Christ Dying, and Drawing Sinners to Himself Or, A Survey of Our Saviour in His Soul-Suffering, His Loveliness in His Death, and the Efficacy Thereof*. (Edinburgh: 1727), 531. Coffey remarks, "As far as Rutherford was concerned, Amyraut's support for universal atonement demonstrated that he was nothing but an Arminian." He thought it repugnant to deny the efficacy of God's intentions and to claim that Christ's redemption was ineffectual to save. See, Coffey, *The Mind of Samuel Rutherford*, 122.

¹³² Warfield explains that Calamy's *via media* should certainly be separated from Arminian universalism, but should also be distinguished from hypothetical universalism. He writes, "It denied equally the Amyraldian doctrine of a universal redemption for all men alike, without exception, on condition of faith, which faith, however, is the product of special grace given to the elect alone, so that only the elect can fulfill the condition...It affirmed a double intention on Christ's part in His work of redemption--declaring that He died absolutely for the elect and conditionally for the reprobate." See, Warfield, *The Making of the Westminster Confession*, 274. See also, Van Dixhoorn, C. B., "Reforming the Reformation: Theological Debate at the Westminster Assembly 1643-1652," 202-211 and Van Dixhoorn, C. B., "Unity and Disunity at the Westminster Assembly (1643-1649)," *The Journal of Presbyterian History* 79, no. 2 (2001).

¹³³ Mitchell, *Minutes*, 153.

behind the decree of the gift of Christ for redemption, and that the latter is to be classed as one of the means for the execution of the decree of election.¹³⁴

In short, all the members of the Assembly agreed to recognize the causal relationship between God's decree to save the elect and the work of Christ in redemption.

The precedence of God's elective decree was largely based on federal theology. Christ's redemptive work was the product of a prior agreement between the Father and the Son. Whether one identifies this pact as a separate covenant of redemption or simply one aspect of the covenant of grace, the Father and the Son determined long before Christ was sent as Redeemer who and to what end he would redeem. Durham, who co-authored *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, which was meant as a companion to the Westminster Standards, explained that, "There was a covenant or bargain betwixt the Father and the Son about the elect before the beginning of the world, whereof as the benefits therein covenanted to the Mediator the gospel maketh an assignation to believers in time."¹³⁵ The benefits which Christ procured for the elect were bound to the offices which he occupied as Mediator. Christ did not merely function as priest, but as prophet, priest, and king in his role as Redeemer.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Warfield maintained that Westminster's choice of wording excluded Amyraut's view on the *ordo decretorum* from the realm of acceptable interpretations, further substantiating the difference between the Westminster moderates and hypothetical universalism. See, Warfield, *The Making of the Westminster Confession*, 277. Vines' statements before the Assembly denouncing the notion of a conditional decree provide evidence for Warfield's conclusions. See, *Reforming*, 210-211. There is some evidence, however, of the connection between Baxter and Westminsterian moderate, Vines. Baxter wrote the introduction to Vines' treatise *Gods Drawing and Mans Coming to Christ*, praising him. Vines also affirmed the universality of Christ's redemption and in places argued for the "salvability" of all sinners in light of Christ's work. See, Vines, R., *Gods Drawing and Mans Coming to Christ* (London: 1662), 188-190.

¹³⁵ Durham, J., *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ, and of Grace and Glory in and Through Him* (Edinburgh: T. Lumisden and J. Robertson, 1745), 169. Concerning Durham's view on the connection between the accomplishment of redemption and application of redemption in Durham's theology, Hodges writes, "His [Christ's] death and sufferings were not designed merely to make Justification possible to those chosen beforehand, but that they might be actually and absolutely justified." See, Hodges, L. I., "The Doctrine of the Mediator in Classical Scottish Theology" (Ph.D., University of Edinburgh, 1975), 470. See also, unknown (David Dickson and/or James Durham), *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* (N.D.), II.2. *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* was written as a companion to the Westminster Standards, clarifying the orthodox Reformed position on federal theology.

¹³⁶ Hypothetical universalists separated Christ's priestly actions of satisfaction and intercession, seeing the former as universally and indiscriminately granted to all humankind and the latter as limited to the elect based on God's secondary decree. Additionally, according to hypothetical universalists, it is only on the basis of God's subsequent decree that Christ is promised as king of salvation to the elect. See, Chapter IV for greater detail on the nature and order of God's decrees.

Durham, therefore, concluded that there was a direct connection between the elect for whom Christ died and those for whom he was king.¹³⁷ This meant that the elect were not simply redeemed from judgment as with Baxterianism, nor were they redeemed to the possibility to be saved as with Arminianism and hypothetical universalism. On the contrary, Christ redeemed the elect unto faith and salvation, and upon faith those who were federally united to him were immediately granted full access to all his benefits.¹³⁸

The Westminster Divines agreed, therefore, that the covenant of grace represented a covenant unto salvation. It was the thread that inextricably linked the various chains of the *ordo salutis* together.¹³⁹ Rutherford explained it was necessary to realize distinctions among the various stages of salvation, but he also clearly stated none of these could be ultimately separated from the others based on the absolute purposes of the Jesus, the Redeemer.¹⁴⁰ Durham summarized the Assembly's option, declaring God's grace ran towards the full salvation of the elect driven by the purpose of God in the redemption of Christ.¹⁴¹ The conclusions delineated at Westminster represented an effort to fortify the causal link between the accomplishment of Christ's redemption and application unto salvation, an

¹³⁷ Durham was quoted by the Associated Synod. See, *Proceedings*, 116. See also, Durham's comments on Rev. 5:9-10 in Durham, J., *A Commentarie on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: Christopher Higgins, 1658).

¹³⁸ Goodwin, T., *The Object and Acts of Justifying Faith* Vol. 8, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), 166. Goodwin's doctrine of assurance was developed around the concept that full benefits of Christ included the assurance of eternal life. According to Goodwin, when a believer was united to Christ, justified and received the Holy Spirit, the Spirit conveyed directly to the believer an inward assurance. See, Horton, M. S., "Thomas Goodwin and the Puritan Doctrine of Assurance: Continuity and Discontinuity in the Reformed Tradition, 1600-1680" (Ph.D., University of Oxford & Coventry University, 1995), 58 and 73. This accompanied his efforts to redirect stress away from the *habitus* of faith for assurance and parallels the emphasis Fraser placed on the assurance found in the direct act of faith.

¹³⁹ *The Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisme* (London: 1651), III.6 and VIII.1.

¹⁴⁰ Rutherford wrote, "We deny not this Distinction of Salvation purchased, or the purchased Redemption, and the applied Redemption, as our Divines acknowledge Christ to be a Saviour by Merit and Efficacy; so that the Members of the Distinction are different, but that they are separated, we deny: Yea, the Distinction, in the *Arminian* Sense, we deny." See, *Dying*, 435.

¹⁴¹ J. Durham, *Exposure of 'Morisonism Exposed;' A Few Strictures on a Certain Brochure of an Uncertain Clericus* (Glasgow: Lang, Adamson, & Co., 1854), 3. Durham, in accordance with many other Westminsterian particularists, taught that there were common graces which flowed to the non-elect through God's covenant, yet he strongly rejected the notion that this common grace should be equated with the benefits of redemption. See, Durham, J., *Christ Crucified: or, The Marrow of the Gospel* (Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1726), 4.

application which was grounded in the purpose of the Redeemer, not first and foremost on the conditional response of the redeemed.

With such a decidedly decretive emphasis to their doctrine of redemption, the Westminster Divines faced the challenge of how to integrate God's prescription to believe on Christ.¹⁴² They considered whether the purposeful nature of Christ's redemption inevitably led to a restricted offer or whether Christ's particular purpose in redemption was compatible with the free offer of the gospel. They concluded that there was no inconsistency in holding to the priority of God's elective decree while also affirming that the gospel should be preached to all without distinction.

They justified the consistency of the free offer with their decree-driven theory of Christ's redemption, claiming the warrant to believe the gospel was based on the Lord's will and command to believe.¹⁴³ In other words, they appropriated Calvin's distinction between the secret and revealed wills of God. Thus, they identified the free offer as a matter to be discussed within the context of God's revealed commands and willingness to save all who believe. The general preaching of the gospel, therefore, provided "warrant for believing and exercising faith on Jesus Christ."¹⁴⁴ They reasoned that God's command supplied sufficient warrant because sinners were right to believe on the crucified Christ himself, not bother with the hidden intentions of God. Accordingly, the gospel did not offer a report of Christ's particular satisfaction; rather it simply presented Christ, the Savior sufficient to save all who come to him by faith.¹⁴⁵ It was folly to attempt to discern the particular aim of Christ's satisfaction before faith, since it was faith that the Holy Spirit employed to translate the general proclamation of salvation into a personal declaration.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Mr. Vines inquired, "That said of the covenant relates to the application. Is not the gospel a covenant, and is not that propounded to every creature? What is the gospel preached to every creature founded upon but the blood of Christ?" See, Mitchell, *Minutes*, 156.

¹⁴³ Durham, *The Errors*, 10. See also, *Dying*, 524.

¹⁴⁴ CC, 11.

¹⁴⁵ The difference between these two options is summarized by those who preach "Christ died for you" and those, like Durham, who declared "Christ is dead for you." Durham assumed that this interpretation satisfactorily presented Christ as "believable" without presuming to know the secret will of God. Advocates of the doctrine of universal redemption, including Fraser, denied that believability of the gospel apart from the inclusion of Christ's universal redemption. CC, 3.

¹⁴⁶ CC, 15. Goodwin, however, acknowledged that personal assurance of Christ's benefits may not and often does not accompany the direct act of faith. See, *Marrow*, 15. See also, *WCF* XVIII.3.

The differing opinions at the Westminster Assembly regarding the extent of Christ's redemption did not deter moderate and conservative Divines from finding common ground regarding the priority of God's decrees. According to Westminster, the purpose of God governed Christ's redemption and determined how and who received the benefits of Christ's work. All the benefits of Christ's redemption were established before the foundation of the world in God's eternal decree. Based on God's purposes, the benefits of Christ's redemption include not only the offer of Christ, but also the application of the Mediator's work as prophet, priest, and king. The Confession summarizes the benefits of Christ's redemption, stating,

To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same; making intercession for them; and revealing unto them, in and by the word, the mysteries of salvation; effectually persuading them by his Spirit to believe and obey; and governing their hearts by his word and Spirit; overcoming all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom, in such manner and ways as are most consonant to his wonderful and unsearchable dispensation.¹⁴⁷

The absolute nature of redemption, according to the Westminster Divines, was indisputable. God's sovereignty implied absolute control. Though moderates and conservatives at the Assembly were not in total agreement regarding the extent of Christ's redemption and whether common grace was a redemptive grace or merely a benefit of God's general benevolence, all affirmed that God's decree and covenant ensured that his purposes in the redemption of Christ would prevail. As a result of the compromises made at the Westminster Assembly, we are better able to decipher what is indispensable to the orthodox Reformed position on Christ's redemption. Surprisingly, it is not the extent of Christ's redemption, but the belief that God's elective decree governed the purpose and efficacy of Christ's redemption. The Confession and Catechisms produced by the Assembly unreservedly assert the limited scope of Christ's redemption to save the elect, yet moderates were able to retain their solidarity with the rest of the Divines derived from a more fundamentally shared position anchored in the decrees of God.

¹⁴⁷ *WCF*, VIII.8.

4.7: Conclusion

Scholarship concerning the 16th and 17th century doctrine of redemption often reveals an unwarranted rigidity of categories. This inflexibility develops when historians and theologians become unnecessarily fixated on the extent of Christ's redemption without thoroughly evaluating other factors contributing to an individual's doctrine of redemption. Such a one-sided examination of the doctrine of Christ's redemption limits the parameters of discussion, and leads to, on the one hand, the illusion of homogeneity and, on the other hand, an unwarranted disparity even though fundamental similarities may still exist. Merely sorting theologians into particularist and non-particularist categories, or classifying them as either advocates of universal or of particular redemption is inadequate. These categories represent a fraction of what is needed to assess properly any individual doctrine of Christ's redemption.

This and the previous chapter have revealed at least three aspects of a theologian's understanding of Christ's redemption, in addition to the extent, that must be considered before attempting a categorization: God's purpose in sending Christ as Redeemer; the link between the accomplishment of redemption and the application of the redemptive benefits to the individual; and the specific benefits of redemption. God's purpose and design for Christ's redemption signifies the first and most essential element for defining a particular doctrine of redemption. Arminius maintained it was God's intention for Christ to destroy death and obtain eternal redemption in order to assist humanity in the process of salvation.¹⁴⁸ Accordingly, Christ's redemption was principally a declaration of the intensity of God's love, which was intended to engender a sinner's willingness to trust and to follow God. God desired some to be saved, but secured salvation for none. Amyraut made a much bolder assumption. His understanding was that Christ came determined to save the whole world.¹⁴⁹ Baxter accepted Cameron and Amyraut's argument for the conditional nature of the decrees, but limited the aim of Christ's redemption to save all humanity from the curse of the law, not to save it unto eternal life. According to Baxter, therefore, Christ's redemption was merely a step towards salvation, not the means to achieve it. Owen and the Westminster Divines, on the other hand,

¹⁴⁸ *WA*, II.297.

¹⁴⁹ Christ redeemed all humanity with a view "to procure the salvation of the human race." It was only after God decreed that Christ would be sent as Redeemer that God reduced the scope of his effort by electing and decreeing to grant faith to the elect. See, *BTP*, 36.

maintained that Christ came to provide all that was needed for the salvation of the elect, including the condition of faith.

Somewhere among these various theories were men like Davenant, Preston, the moderates at the Westminster Assembly, and Fraser, who contended that Christ's provision of redemption was more broadly aimed at both the elect and the non-elect, but included neither the intent to save universally nor a conditional decree. Such universalists, or those who might be called 'universal particularists,' were as devoted to the absolute nature and supremacy of God's predestining decrees as Owen and the more conservative Westminster Divines. Hence, Fraser could claim agreement with the particularism of Rutherford and Durham because of his commitment to the absolute nature of God's decrees and the efficacious design of Christ's redemption.

The second factor in evaluating the doctrine of redemption is how closely a theologian links the accomplishment of redemption by Christ and the application of redemption to the believer. Arminius explained that Christ provided an immediate universal, and objective grace through his universal redemption. This grace, however, may or may not lead the sinner to salvation. In other words, there was no causal link, only a remote link between Christ's redemption and an individual's salvation. Amyraut and Baxter also separated Christ's redemption from any saving effects denying an immediate causal link between the two. Alternatively, Owen and the Westminster Divines both affirmed a direct causal link, connecting God's decree to send Christ through the completion of Christ's work to the salvation of the elect. The universalists-particularists advocated a middle-way between Reformed orthodoxy and conditional redemption. They generally stressed the causal and absolute connection between Christ's redemption and the salvation of the elect, yet introduced a conditional link between Christ's redemption and God's common grace to the non-elect. Fraser would be more accurately identified with Owen and Westminster on this point because of the absolute nature of both sides of his two-fold doctrine of redemption. Fraser's doctrine states that Christ died universally for all, but that his redemption directly secured one thing for the reprobate and another for God's elect. Fraser, therefore, maintained the causal relationship between the act of Christ's redemption and its application, yet he also incorporated a universal or two-fold design in Christ's purposes.

The third aspect of an individual's doctrine of redemption that needs to be clarified when attempting to categorize a theologian is what he understands the benefits of redemption to be. Arminius believed Christ secured victory over death and the keys to salvation; however, he believed sinners were supplied with a common grace, which enabled them to choose whether to accept or reject God's offer of salvation.¹⁵⁰ Amyraut, too, spoke in terms of Christ securing the rights to salvation, rights that were only subsequently purposed for the elect and granted upon the fulfillment of God's condition and secondary elective decree. Consequently, according to Amyraut, Christ's redemption did little more than transfer all humanity from the damned to the savable. Baxter explained that Christ's redemption secured a legal satisfaction for sin and procured the rights to a new covenant of grace, whose conditions were faith and sincere obedience. Owen and Westminster denounced all three opinions, arguing if the benefits of Christ's redemption were anything other than full salvation, then salvation was trapped in the realm of hypotheticals. They maintained that the sinfulness and inability of man ensure that Christ must not only gain the right to save, but also sovereignly grant the means to access salvation. Proponents of Reformed orthodoxy, therefore, claimed that redemption secured salvation for the redeemed, a position which logically led to the limitation of its extent. The universal particularists insisted that the reprobate enjoyed common grace and conditional salvific benefits from Christ's death, while also recognizing that Christ's redemption secured the salvific benefits for the elect absolutely. On this point, Fraser was in a category of his own. His assertion was that both the elect and the reprobate benefited absolutely. Christ secured salvation for the elect and greater wrath for the reprobate, a concept which caused Fraser to coin the term "Gospel-Wrath."¹⁵¹

Whether considered in terms of God's purpose for Christ's death, the distance between the accomplishment of redemption and its application, or the benefits sinners enjoy as recipients of Christ's redemption, each one of these examples demonstrates the fact that the doctrine of redemption is significantly more complex

¹⁵⁰ *WA*, I.755-756.

¹⁵¹ *JF*, 254. Calvin noted the particularly offensive nature of the rejection of the promises in Christ's redemption by those within the covenanted community, the church. It was upon condemnations like these that Fraser formulated his unique perspective of gospel wrath. See, Calvin, J., *Commentary Upon the Acts of the Apostles* Vol. II, Trans. by H. Beveridge. Calvin's Commentaries (Vol. XIX) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 256.

than can be justifiably described by the categories of ‘limited’ and ‘universal.’¹⁵² Scholars of the 16th and 17th centuries must broaden the parameters of the debate surrounding the doctrine of redemption beyond these simplistic terms in order to get at the heart of the matter. Stereotypes do not make for good scholarship, and as this brief summary of the doctrine of redemption has shown, common terminology does not necessarily communicate agreement in content.

James Fraser of Brea provides an excellent example of how the one-dimensional categories of limited or universal redemption, particularist and non-particularist, and even Arminian and Amyraldian, are wholly inadequate. Despite the lack of substantial justification, numerous theologians and historians have attempted to force Fraser into one or more of these categories simply based on the terminology he preferred. His contemporaries took one glance at his universalism and quickly denounced it as Arminian.¹⁵³ On the other hand, modern scholars recognize the presence of a universal and a particular in Fraser’s doctrine of redemption and are then convinced that he must be a hypothetical universalist.¹⁵⁴ This survey of the developments in the doctrine of redemption during the 16th and 17th centuries has demonstrated that such categories are insufficient to accommodate the views of Davenant, Preston, and the moderate Westminsterian Divines, not to mention Luther and Calvin. Fraser is no different. The remainder of this thesis, therefore, will unearth Fraser from this mountain of presumptions, in order to discover the truth regarding his doctrine of redemption.

¹⁵² Armstrong identifies correlations between the Synod of Dort’s pronounced infralapsarianism and hypothetical universalists’ *ordo decretorum*. He contrasts this with particularism, which places priority on the decree, which he believes necessitates restricting the scope of Christ’s redemption to the elect. See, *CAH*, 138. This thesis challenges Armstrong’s conclusions at several points, namely his perception of the complementary nature of Dort’s and hypothetical universalism’s understanding of the decrees and his failure to recognize the continuity between Dort’s and Westminster’s adherence to the absolute nature of Christ’s redemption.

¹⁵³ See, *Act*, 48; *Proceedings*, iii; Reformed Presbytery, *The True State*, 8; Gib, *The Present Truth*, 131. Thomas Mair adopted Fraser’s doctrine of universal redemption, and like Fraser disavowed any connection with Arminianism and hypothetical universalism. See, Mair, *The Case Laid Open*, 15.

¹⁵⁴ See, *JFB*, 565; Kitschoff, *Aspects of Arminianism*, 193; McCrie, *The Church of Scotland*, 45-46; Beaton, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, 129.

CHAPTER V: FRASER'S QUEST FOR ASSURANCE

5.1: Introduction

It is one of the governing premises of this thesis that Fraser's endeavors to delineate his views on the doctrine of universal redemption originated from his desire to discover greater personal assurance of salvation. The impetus to articulate a more reassuring view of Christ's redemptive work, therefore, represents a significant contextualizing when seeking to evaluate Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption. This chapter will analyze how his understanding of assurance influenced his perspective on Christ's redemption and reciprocally how Christ's universal redemption, according to Fraser, strengthened his case for personal assurance.

The following discussion has five aims. First, Fraser's personal and theological development will be examined to demonstrate the quest for greater assurance was first and foremost an extension of his private anxieties over assurance of his interest in Christ's redemption. Secondly, Calvin's and the 17th century particularists' doctrine of assurance will be analyzed to provide the context within which Fraser's doctrine of assurance grew. Thirdly, Fraser's alterations to the more traditional form of particularism and his arguments against Baxter's approach to Christ's redemption will be scrutinized for their impact upon his doctrine of assurance. Fourthly, Fraser's attempt to offer a synthesized version of the doctrine of assurance in the face of the inadequacies of Baxter's and the traditional Reformed approach to assurance will be described. Lastly, on the basis of his own criteria, Fraser's doctrine of assurance will be critiqued revealing that despite his passionate determination to succeed, Fraser was unable to overcome the deficiencies within rival doctrines of assurance.¹

¹ It is the conclusion of this thesis that Fraser, though broadening the extent of Christ's redemption, remained fundamentally aligned with the particularists' position on Christ's redemption. Accordingly,

5.2: Fraser's Personal Journey to Discover Greater Assurance

Fraser's writings reveal the quest to find a firmer foundation for personal assurance did not originate as an academic or theological inquiry. The quest began as a personal one. Whyte explained Fraser was a very "sullen" child prone to uncommon introspection.² Cumming alludes to how Fraser's depressed disposition prejudiced his sense of God's favor towards him, remarking, "Fraser of Brea is a melancholy instance of how not a few children of God, have deemed themselves under His ban, and have spent their days in a cloud which seldom was lifted up."³ Fraser confessed that during these frequent times of uncertainty he sought refuge in the more diligent performance of religious duties. Fraser's tendency towards legalism, however, only made matters worse.⁴ He viewed his standing before God to be in a constant state of flux.

Nevertheless, he heeded the exhortations of theologians like Shepherd who exhorted his readers, "O, learn hence to suspect and fear your estates, and fear it so much that thou canst not be quiet until thou hast got some assurance thou shalt be saved."⁵ Fraser knew that he must find a place to rest, yet he struggled to accept his participation in the grace of God in salvation. Hence, the challenge to 'suspect and fear his estate' only pushed him further into a legalistic exercise of his religious duties. He recounted these early years, stating, "what evil soever came upon me, I judged it to be for the omission of my duties, which I looked upon as my greatest sin."⁶ Fraser tried to convince himself if he continued to perform his religious duties faithfully he would be saved, though his acute sense of sin soon shattered any notion

his arguments for assurance were susceptible to many of the same challenges, if not more, facing other particularists. Fraser, however, chose to believe that he had overcome most of these obstacles.

² *Memoirs*, 1.

³ Cumming, *Holy Men*, 123.

⁴ Whyte and Cumming both explain that Fraser's struggles with assurance as a result of appealing to the faithful performance of religious disciplines were only reinforced by the legalistic undercurrents pervading the church in the late 17th century. *Laird*, 25. Also, see, Cumming, *Holy Men*, 123. Fraser identified Baxter and those sympathetic to neonomianism as the primary culprits behind the influx of legalism and the threat to assurance.

⁵ Shepard, T., *The Sincere Convert, Discovering the Poverty of True Believers* (London: T.P., 1641), 58.

⁶ *Memoirs*, 3.

that acceptance before God was achievable on his own merit.⁷ His insecurities mounted, and soon he took no consolation even from the execution of his duties.⁸

The inability to perform his religious duties represented a huge stumbling block for Fraser finding assurance of salvation, yet Cumming argues that there was a most fundamental obstacle in Fraser's path. He explains,

It was quite clear what was wanting and what was wrong. It was the sorrowful thought that Christ would not accept what he offered Him; the unbelieving thought that he had done his part, and that Christ would not do His; that he was ready to be saved, and that Christ was not willing to save him.⁹

According to Cumming, Fraser was plagued by the fear that even if he faithfully performed all that God had required of him that Christ would reject him. Fraser was left in a frantic state. His duties were not able to erase the guilt of his sins, and he doubted Christ's willingness to be his sin-bearer.¹⁰

His uncertainties persisted until his first year of university. As Fraser contemplated his spiritual state during preparation for communion, something changed.¹¹ The Lord began to cause him to become dissatisfied with his "unconverted condition."¹² He expressed the change that occurred when the Lord opened his eyes to the benefits of Christ in the gospel.¹³ Fraser wrote,

Finally was the light and dawning of the morning, which put an end to that night of exercise, was one night meditating on my condition, the Spirit brought a word 1 Tim: 1.15. This is a faithfull saying and to my remembrance, and made me consider it which while I did, the Lord was pleased to open my understanding, reveal his will, gospell, and so much of the natures, goodness and offices of Christ, covenant of grace

⁷ *Memoirs*, 11.

⁸ *Memoirs*, 13.

⁹ Cumming, *Holy Men*, 115-116.

¹⁰ *Memoirs*, 13.

¹¹ *Memoirs*, 23. Whyte dates Fraser's conversion in 1656 or 1657. See, *Laird*, 30.

¹² *Memoirs*, 23.

¹³ *Memoirs*, 24.

and such a confluence of promises for clearing of the covenant of grace, which more with such clearness of light, efficacy of power prest on my understanding and Spirit that providently? Say grace so superabounding it was impossible for me not to behoove, then had I other thoughts of the gospell then I had before, and I perceived how either my self or other know thou of Christ promises was 1 Tim: 1.15. John.6.28. that word in Isa: 27.4.fury is not in me John.3.17 God sent not his Son to condemn and a word God is the confidence of all the ends of the savth with many others, thos were so clear and powerfull.¹⁴

After his conversion, Fraser turned away from his efforts to appease God by his performance of spiritual disciplines and focused anew on the gospel, the promises of God, the priestly office of Christ, and the covenant of grace. Each of these played an integral role in substantiating his claims for assurance, and consequently, formed the pillars upon which he developed his doctrine of Christ's redemption. Though doubts never ceased to plague him, Fraser could finally accept that Christ was both able and willing to save him.¹⁵

The spiritual insights Fraser gained through the process of his conversion compelled him to condemn vigorously the efforts of any theologian whom he deemed a threat to his new found gospel-centered religion, and respectively an impediment to personal assurance.¹⁶ Fraser felt compelled to write. Each of his theological treatises was a product of what he viewed as his calling to undermine all forms of legalistic religion and to substantiate the assurance which flowed from a biblical perspective on Christ's redemption. In the preface of his work *Some Choice, Select Meditations*, Fraser explained his motivation for writing, "These Meditations will help those struggling with doubt and fear and unbelief for want of Right and Title in Christ."¹⁷ In *A Treatise on Justifying Faith*, he similarly stated,

¹⁴ Fraser, *Mr James Frasers Life*, 93-94.

¹⁵ See, Cumming, *Holy Men*, 123. Whyte remarks that Fraser's life reads like a commentary on Romans 7. See, *Laird*, 164.

¹⁶ It is important to note that Fraser embarked upon his theological writings with a pastor's heart. He was not so much concerned with advancing his particular doctrines of faith and redemption as he was determined to help others find freedom from fear and the assurance of God's favor in Christ.

¹⁷ *SCSM*, 2.

The true Grounds moving me both to write on this Subject, and publish what I have written, were, (1.) The Sweetness and Advantage redounding to the Soul exercised with this Subject, and humbly searching into this Mystery, abundantly more than recompensing the Pains and Toil thereof: This, I say, made me allow my Soul and Spirit to feed here; and being desirous to improve the Truths relating to the Gospel, to my Soul's Profit, I have now mostly, if not only conversed with these Truths, out of Design chiefly, at first, to advantage my self, and satisfy my Conscience. (2.) In pursuing this Motion and Inclination of Heart, I have found such Contentment and Advantage, through the Lord's Mercy, being cleared and satisfied in several important Difficulties, which much straitned my Conscience, that I saw no Ground to repent of my Undertaking: And I conceived, That what was useful to me, might, through the Lord's Blessing, be so to others, to whom I am devoted, and whose I am more than my own. This I looked upon as a call to put Hand to this Work.¹⁸

Fraser claimed that the Lord had granted him a reprieve from many difficulties that had previously strained his conscience. Out of compassion, he wished to pass to others the insight he had gained.

Prior to God's illuminating the truth of the gospel to his conscience, Fraser was overwhelmed by the fear that he had no interest in Christ's efforts to redeem, and therefore, he doubted God would accept him. He did not assume he was alone in this struggle. He explained,

The greatest and most eminent Christians have been kept in such Bondage that they have judged it Presumption to call the Lord their Father at any Time, and walked all their Days in Fears and Doubts, never almost ordinarily winning to any settling of Mind.¹⁹

According to Fraser, he and many others were kept in "bondage" by the apprehension that it would be presumptuous of them to come to Christ. Such a shackling of conscience inevitably restricted a believer's ability to experience the

¹⁸ *JFSF*, 3-4.

¹⁹ *JF*, 141.

fullness of life in Christ and the assurance that life should communicate to the heart and mind of the believer.

Doubts, Fraser acknowledged, were a natural effect of the separation between God and his creation through the fall of Adam.²⁰ Fraser had attempted to restore his position before God by his own efforts, but his conversion had taught only the gospel provides a reliable means of reconciliation between God and man and only the gospel supplies the salve for a guilty and troubled conscience. The gospel dispelled the doubts that came from man's natural, sinful state before God. In the gospel, Fraser maintained, a sinner's 'right' is established.²¹

The right that the gospel provides, Fraser argued, was grounds for assurance because no one could be in doubt as to whether or not God was willing to save him. Conversely, without such a stated right, sinners must presume upon their interest in the cross. Fraser desired to eliminate the possibility of presumption because uncertainty kept weak-minded Christians in fear of their eternal state and hindered unbelieving seekers from confidently embracing Christ. Thus, Fraser turned to the gospel, since it was nothing more, according to him, than the publication and proclamation of the covenant of grace.²² The association between the gospel and the covenant of grace implied that the gospel communicated God's unbreakable promise and an absolute right. Fraser rejoiced in the unassailable provision for assurance that this absolute, covenanted right spoke to all sinners. Fraser exhorted his readers, saying,

See what Grounds of Confidence and Rejoicing Believers have: For ask such, why they rejoice and plead so familiarly with God, they will tell, because the Lord hath promised all they want to them, and hath given them *Christ* the great Mercy.²³

Fraser's efforts to re-establish a sinner's confidence in the gospel illustrated an important shift in his doctrine of assurance.²⁴ He shifted the focus away from the

²⁰ *JF*, 59-60.

²¹ *JF*, 113.

²² *JF*, 113.

²³ *JFSF*, 113.

²⁴ The warrant or right that is conveyed in the gospel provides the foundation upon which Fraser built his claim that assurance is of the essence of faith. Boston made a similar deduction. See, Boston, *An Explication*, 256.

notion that assurance was principally discovered through the reflex act of faith. This meant that Fraser was increasingly concerned to redirect sinners to the source of assurance which came directly through faith in Christ, rather than the secondary and less predictable form of assurance which came as a result of believers reflecting on the fruits of faith expressed in their lives.²⁵

Fraser's emphasis on the direct act of faith based on the absolute right given to all sinners in the gospel was not received without opposition. Particularists, with whom Fraser ultimately wished to be identified, more commonly spoke of assurance in relation to the reflex act of faith and denied any assurance prior to believing.²⁶ However, as the conclusions resulting from the Marrow Controversy in the early 18th century reveal, particularism and the doctrine of assurance which concentrates on the assurance flowing from the direct act of faith are in fact compatible, though initially their compatibility was suspect.²⁷ Fraser's greatest opposition, therefore, did not come from the particularists but from those who on the surface appeared to be teaching a doctrine of Christ's redemption very similar to Fraser's and with whom Fraser, at least in modern scholarship, has frequently been associated.

Despite the attempts by several modern scholars to reduce Fraser's complex theory of Christ's redemption to another form of conditional redemption along the lines of Amyraut and Baxter, Fraser himself would have none of it. Fraser recognized there was a fundamental distinction between the teachings of hypothetical universalism, which according to Fraser was simply another form of legalism, and his two-fold, absolute interpretation of Christ's redemption. The latter, argued Fraser, established a firm foundation for faith and assurance, while the former undercut any ability to believe with confidence. The preface of his memoirs testifies to how passionately Fraser opposed Baxter's conditional soteriological system. He writes, "I

²⁵ See Section 4.4.2 of this thesis for a fuller discussion on the development and implications of Fraser's understanding of the primacy of the direct act of faith in fostering assurance over and against the instability in conscience created by the reflex act of faith.

²⁶ *WCF*, XVIII. Fraser taught that that unbelievers must be 'assured' of their right to the gospel even prior to faith.

²⁷ Lachman argues that the Marrowmen's conviction that assurance accompanied the direct act of faith reflected their continuity with, rather than a departure from, the theology of the earlier Reformers and Westminsterian particularists. See, *Marrow*, 9, 11, 14 and 15. Hadow, one of the Marrowmen's chief critics, did not agree. He considered *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* to be against "Self-examination" and to have put too much emphasis upon the direct act of faith as a source of assurance. See, Hadow, J., *The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity Detected* (Edinburgh: John Mosman and Company, 1721), 21-27.

abhorred and was at enmity with Mr. Baxter, as a stated enemy to the grace of God, under the cover of opposing some Antinomianism.”²⁸ This condemnation resulted from the fact Fraser believed that Baxterian conditionality, which indeed is indicative of all hypothetical universalism, effectively destroyed all grounds for assurance by repudiating the absolute nature of God’s decrees and covenant and by undercutting one’s confidence in the efficacy and completeness of Christ’s redemption.²⁹

In order to fortify his defense against Baxterianism and establish his arguments for a more objective basis for assurance, Fraser appealed first to Calvin and then to the particularists of the 17th century, like Durham and Rutherford. Fraser’s dependence on the Reformers of the 16th and 17th centuries signified that, at least from his perspective, these theologians were allies in the fight for the gospel, waging war against a common foe. Fraser held the conviction along with Calvin and the Westminsterian particularists that Christ’s redemption was absolute and efficacious, not conditional and impotent. The next section will explore Calvin’s and the 17th century particularists’ perspectives on assurance with a view to understanding better how Fraser perceived assurance and why he so aggressively denounced Baxter’s teachings.³⁰

5.3: An Appeal to Calvin’s Doctrine of Assurance

5.3.1: Solus Christus

Fraser appealed to Calvin in response to Baxterianism. Though Baxter would have denied it, Calvin’s battle with the legalistic doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church paralleled Fraser’s dispute against Baxterianism. J. Beeke describes Calvin’s context,

²⁸ *Memoirs*, 233.

²⁹ Fraser lamented the effects of Baxterianism, writing, “So did we never see fewer assured Christians than since for Consolation of weak Christians Faith was denied to consist in Assurance; and since, we slipped out of the good old Way, where *Calvin, Luther*, and the first Reformers walk’d.” See, *JFSF*, 63. Fraser wanted his reader to see that he was claiming continuity with the early Reformers. Respectfully, he desired to be identified with the orthodox perspective on Christ’s redemption and the assurance an accurate perspective offers.

³⁰ It is outside the parameters of this chapter and this thesis to exhaust the historical development of systematic theology and its impact on the doctrine of assurance. Therefore, Calvin and the general consensus of Westminsterian theologians are the focus in the following section. Context will be provided in order to validate the interpretations made.

Calvin was speaking to a contemporary situation which was not overflowing with assurance. Instead of there being plenty of assurance to go around, Calvin finds himself addressing Christians newly delivered from the bondage of Rome which shackled believers by teaching assurance to be semi-heretical. Calvin's goal, in fact, was to raise the degree of assurance in the church onto solid, Biblical grounds. He is out to teach his doubting flock that assurance ought to be normative in Christ, though unbelief will not down.³¹

According to Beeke, one of the impetuses for Calvin's labors in the Reformation was the "bondage" of Catholicism. This was a bondage created by fear, to which only the Catholic Church held a key. According to Calvin, the Catholic Church attempted to substitute the church for Christ, stipulating that Christ's redemption merely provided a reservoir of grace which could only be accessed through an individual's participation in the sacramental system of the Catholic Church.³²

Calvin saw this type of sacramentalism as an idol, replacing Christ with the signs and ordinances of the Church. The Church's stance on Christ's redemption meant that any sin jeopardized the potential for pardon, and since Christians inevitably continue to sin, assurance, therefore, could not be fully achieved in the Catholic Church. Calvin understood that the sinner "will always doubt whether he has a merciful God; he will always be troubled, and always tremble," and when these doubts arise he must have something more eternal and reliable than his own religious works.³³ Calvin maintained, as Fraser would after him, that the Church could not function as the immovable foundation of faith that assurance demanded.³⁴ All confidence must rest on Christ alone.

The motto *solus Christus* signified the Reformers' conviction that nothing could be added or taken away from Christ's work of redemption.³⁵ In Christ,

³¹ Beeke, J. R., "The Relationship of Saving Faith and Assurance in Reformation and Post-Reformation Theology," *Evangelical Theological Society Papers* Theological Research Exchange Network (San Diego, CA, 1990), 27.

³² *Institutes*, III.iv.27.

³³ *Institutes*, III.iv.27. See also, Lyons, D. D., "Calvin's and Wesley's Doctrine of Assurance: A Comparative Study" (M.A., Biola University, 1986), 9.

³⁴ *AF*, 16. See also, Lyons, "Calvin's and Wesley's Doctrine of Assurance," 18.

³⁵ The Christological focus of Calvin's understanding of assurance compelled him to emphasize faith in Christ alone as the central concern with regard to both the direct act of faith and the reflex act of

complete satisfaction and righteousness was gained for the elect. Commenting on 1 John 2:2, Calvin remarked, “There is no other satisfaction whereby offended God can be propitiated or appeased.”³⁶ According to Calvin, Christ became the foundation of forgiveness as well as the source for assurance of salvation because all sinners believing in Christ, regardless of the strength or weakness of their faith, could turn to the cross and see their sins dealt with.³⁷ Calvin understood that feeble consciences would continue to hinder believers, and therefore, he exhorted his readers, “We must seek peace for ourselves solely in the anguish of Christ our Redeemer.”³⁸ It was this Christocentric emphasis in Calvin’s theology to which Fraser was so attracted. Fraser knew that he must look away from himself and towards his Redeemer if he was going to have any confidence in salvation. Fraser was convinced that the objective peace that Christ’s redemption work provided could be translated into a subjective peace that would quieten the agitations of any sinner’s conscience.

self-examination. According to Calvin, though the direct act of faith and the reflex act of faith look immediately to different foundations for assurance and convey varying degrees of assurance, both the promises to which faith adheres in its direct act and the inward evidences of grace to which faith looks in its reflex act are grounded upon trust in Christ alone. See, Beeke, J. R., “Does Assurance Belong to the Essence of Faith? Calvin and the Calvinists,” *TMSJ* Spring 1994: 56 and Zachman, R. C., *The Assurance of Faith: Conscience in the Theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 211. Beeke maintains against other modern scholars like Basil Hall and R.T. Kendall that the post-Reformation particularists retained the Christological focus of Calvin’s teachings on assurance despite the efforts to formulate their discussions of assurance many times in terms of a *sylogismus practicus*. See, Beeke, J. R., “Personal Assurance of Faith: The Puritans and Chapter 18.2 of the *Westminster Confession*,” *WTJ* 55 (1993): 3. In contrast, Letham argues that “The use of the *sylogismus practicus* as the ground of assurance inevitably required the further employment of the *sylogismus mysticus*. The end result was the encouragement of the development of pietism and legalism.” See, Letham, R. W. A., “Saving Faith and Assurance in Reformed Theology: Zwingli to the Synod of Dort” (Ph.D., University of Aberdeen, 1979), 368. Niesel agrees with Letham that the *sylogismus practicus* is not compatible with Calvin’s doctrine of assurance. See, Niesel, W., *The Theology of Calvin* Trans. by H. Knight. (Philadelphia, PA: 1956), 171. Fraser was convinced that his doctrine of assurance mirrored the Christological focus espoused by Calvin, avoided the pitfall of Arminianism and Baxterianism and better articulated the accessibility of assurance than traditional forms of particularism.

³⁶ *Institutes*, III.iv.26.

³⁷ Beeke comments on Calvin’s efforts to differentiate the assurance that accompanies true saving faith and the doubts which remain because of the continuing presence of sin in the believer. He explains, “Calvin teaches that from the spirit of faith arise hope, joy, assurance; from the flesh, fear, doubt, disillusionment. Though these two principles may operate simultaneously, Calvin maintains that imperfection and doubt are attributable only to the flesh, not to faith. The works of the flesh often attend faith, but do not mix with it.” See, Beeke, “Does Assurance Belong to the Essence of Faith?”, 54.

³⁸ *Institutes*, III.xiii.4.

5.3.2: *The Gospel Reveals the Grounds for Our Confidence*

The vehicle for communicating the peace of Christ for Calvin and later for Fraser was the gospel. Calvin made a connection between the assurance of the sufficiency of Christ's righteousness and the gospel, stating, "Our confidence of salvation is rooted in Christ, and rests on the promises of the Gospel."³⁹ Describing Calvin's perspective, R. Nicole writes,

Calvin is also concerned to express the sufficiency of the work of Christ so that no one inclined to claim this work and to cast himself or herself on the mercy of God should feel discouraged by thinking that somehow the cross would not avail for him/her. This sufficiency is also important with reference to the indiscriminate, universal offer of grace and to the personal guilt of those who reject this offer.⁴⁰

According to Calvin, therefore, Christ's sacrifice and the satisfaction which flows from it not only provided the actual righteousness to save sinners from their sins, but also established the warrant for sinners to be assured that God's promise to save was reliable. Calvin insisted, "For if God promise anything, by it he witnesses his benevolence, so that there is no promise of his which is not a testimony of his love."⁴¹ This love testified that "whatever God mercifully promises, he also faithfully performs."⁴² Therefore, the promise conveyed in the gospel rendered the conscience "calm and peaceful before God's judgment" and provided the basis for Calvin's teaching that assurance was of the essence of faith.⁴³

³⁹ Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism*, 12.

⁴⁰ Nicole, *John Calvin's View*, 217.

⁴¹ *Institutes*, III.ii.32.

⁴² *Institutes*, III.xiii.4.

⁴³ *Institutes*, III.ii.15 and 16. Calvin's definition of faith incorporated assurance. However, Calvin also recognized that this initial assurance could be strengthened or weakened. Thus, he affirmed that there were two levels to assurance. The one that accompanied faith was more objective, while the assurance felt throughout living the Christian life was more subjective. Fraser's understanding of assurance echoed Calvin's in these respects. See, *Atonement*, 203 and Beeke, *The Relationship of Saving Faith*, 11. Conversely, Bell objected to Fraser's distinction between the "Assurance of Sense" and the "Assurance of Faith," seeing the assurance of sense as a post-Reformation doctrine not found in Calvin and a position that would lead believers away from Christ and towards self-examination. It is the judgment of this thesis that Bell's failure to identify the two aspects of assurance in Calvin resulted in an inaccurate reading of Fraser. See, *Assurance*, 141-142.

This concept of assurance espoused by Calvin was met with vehement opposition from Arminius and his followers. Arminius, writes Morris, “denounced the doctrine of assurance as a pillow for the flesh, hurtful to good manners, godliness, prayer and other holy courses.”⁴⁴ According to Arminius, the notion that assurance was of the essence of faith would lead to apathy for holy living. He argued that the sinners could not enjoy any sense of election in this life.⁴⁵ Furthermore, he maintained that Christ’s redemption merely supplied a prevenient grace, whereby salvation was made attainable.⁴⁶ Believers, therefore, were responsible for assuring themselves by their good works.⁴⁷

Arminius’ Christology and understanding of faith and assurance made subjective that which Calvin had labored to make objective. For Calvin, the object of faith was the person and work of Christ. For Arminius, on the other hand, it was faith itself and holy living of the individual which served as the path to salvation and assurance.

The contrast between the teachings of Calvin and Arminius as they relate to the doctrine of assurance are significant because in large part they foreshadow Fraser’s efforts to build his case for assurance over and against that of Baxterianism. As highlighted previously, Fraser self-consciously sought to build upon the doctrinal foundations of the early Reformers, and though Baxter would not admit it, his understanding of the redemptive work of Christ and the nature of assurance complimented the self-justifying spirit of Arminianism.⁴⁸ These parallels will

⁴⁴ Morris, E. D., *Theology of the Westminster Symbols* (Columbus, OH: The Champlin Press, 1900), 501.

⁴⁵ *WA*, 528. See also, Turretin, F., *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* 2 Vols., Edit. by J.T. Dennison, Trans. by G. M. Giger. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992), 373-374.

⁴⁶ Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly*, 387. Fraser condemned both the Roman Catholics and Arminians for teaching that “Christ died equally for all Elect and Reprobate” and that “by his Death he procured to all sufficient objective Grace and Means of Salvation and sufficient subjective Grace, a Power, a self-determining Principle whereby Man may of himself without any other special efficacious assisting of God’s Spirit accept of the Grace offered, improve and make good.” He declared that the concept of a universal, prevenient grace was a fantasy, and it encouraged sinners to rest unwarrantably on their own merits for righteousness. See, *JF*, 160 and *JFSF*, 30.

⁴⁷ The covenant that God established through Christ’s redeeming work is a two-way covenant. God offers and a person must respond. Salvation and assurance ultimately rests on a person’s acceptance or rejection of God’s promises. *WA*, 406.

⁴⁸ Fraser, like Calvin, encouraged his readers to believe confidently, not because of the sense of assurance which came through reflecting on the fruits of faith but because God has made a promise to save through the cross and that promise has been given to all who respond in faith to gospel. Baxter, on the other hand and in much the same way as Arminius, exhorted his readers that they must be

become more apparent when Fraser's response to Baxter is analyzed, but prior to that one more contextualizing element to Fraser's argument must be addressed, namely his dependence upon the strict particularists of the 17th century.

5.4: An Appeal to the Post-Reformation Particularists' Doctrine of Assurance

5.4.1: Federal Theology

In addition to appealing to Calvin and the early Reformers, Fraser acknowledged his dependence upon the 17th century particularists like Durham, Goodwin and Rutherford. This reliance upon particularism stemmed from a shared conviction that God's decrees governed Christ's redemption and this work of redemption established an absolute means whereby the elect were secured for salvation. The significance of these common foundational beliefs is essential to the ultimate conclusions of this thesis, but it would be an error to assume Fraser's doctrine of redemption or his approach to assurance was identical to that of the more traditional form of particularism.⁴⁹ This section will demonstrate there were at least two areas in which Fraser applied the methodology used by traditional particularists as he sought to establish his argument for assurance.

The first area in which Fraser exhibited loyalty to traditional particularism was his use of federal theology. During the Post-Reformation period, there was a

willing to endure "The Tryal of the Physical Truth or Sincerity of our Acts." Through this trial, Baxter argued, the believer's conscience would testify as to the trueness of one's faith. He claimed that a believer could have no knowledge of the object of faith. Alternatively, the only thing which could be known with certainty was the subject. Perplexed and dismayed with the idea that by scrutinizing a troubled conscience one might discover a cure for that troubled conscience, Fraser branded Baxter as a legalist and a promoter of an anti-gospel religion. See, Baxter, R., *The Saints Everlasting Rest: or, A Treatise of the Blessed State of the Saints in Their Enjoyment of God in Glory* (London: 1652), 138 and 140-141. Packer remarks that *Aphorismes of Justification* solidified Baxter's position on justification and his ideas regarding the covenant of grace, confirming the suspicions of many contemporary critics, who, even as early as 1646, suspected Baxter tended toward Arminianism. See, *RR*, 193.

⁴⁹ The evidence provided in this thesis reveals that Fraser did not, as many modern scholars conclude, adopt some form of hypothetical universalism or conditional redemption. Fraser's doctrine of redemption was both absolute and particular in all respects. However, the view that Christ absolutely redeemed the reprobate along with the elect, yet for different ends, marked a significant deviation from the single-sided redemption theory of most particularists. Fraser affirmed the absolute and particular nature of Christ's redemption as much as Rutherford and Durham. Hence, he insisted that his teachings were consistent with the doctrinal system taught in the Westminster Standards. See, *JF*, 251 and 252. Walker identifies Fraser's theory of redemption as containing "the last faint gleam" of the theology of Rutherford and Patrick Gillespie. Thus, Walker recognizes a certain degree of continuity between Fraser's perspective and an orthodox view of Christ's redemption, yet he suggests that Fraser also represents a move away from a more acceptable form of particularism. See, Walker, J., *The Theology and Theologians of Scotland 1560-1750* (Edinburgh: Knox Press, 1982), 71.

tremendous emphasis on refining the covenant theology of the 16th century, the effect of which was to develop a detailed federal paradigm. This federal system outlined how God dealt with his people and the duty God required of them. This system and specifically its effect on the understanding of conditionality in the covenant will be examined in greater depth in Chapter VII of this thesis. However, for the moment it is important to understand how 17th century federal theology was employed and what effect it had on the doctrine of assurance.

J. Von Rohr explains that the aim of federal theology, though illustrative of the impact of scholasticism, was pastoral.⁵⁰ The covenant was the meeting point of God's divine decree and the human response of faith to God's call. Von Rohr's conclusions are illustrated by Rutherford's description of the comfort believers have as a result of the covenant. Rutherford explained, "If I be within the covenant of grace it is (to speak so with reverence of my lord) a shame for Christ to loose me since he is cautioner for me."⁵¹ According to Rutherford, federal theology, far from being an inhibitor to assurance, provided the basis for a more objective form of assurance. It was through the covenant that God pledged his name in the blood of Christ that he would in fact save his elect. Therefore, when the elect doubted they were exhorted to turn again to the covenant that was absolute and unbreakable.

5.4.2: Assurance in the Direct Act of Faith

In addition to implementing the federal paradigm as his means for communicating the authenticity and reliability of the gospel promises, Fraser also sought help from several 17th century particularists when arguing that assurance was not a distant fruit of faith but a direct result of faith exercised. There is some debate among modern scholars as to whether particularists denied that the direct act of faith could produce assurance, which would make Fraser's appeal to these theologians suspect.⁵² However, a brief description of the particularists' approach to assurance

⁵⁰ Von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace*, 2.

⁵¹ Mitchell, A. F., *Catechisms of the Second Reformation* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1886), 177.

⁵² Several modern scholars have argued the opposite point, maintaining that federal theologians separated faith and assurance on the basis that a particular offer of Christ was not granted in the gospel. See, *Marrow*, 11. Goodwin seemed to provide credibility for this conclusion when he wrote, "I shall not therefore speak of that faith which only some particular Christians arrive to, as faith of personal assurance, accompanied with joy unspeakable and full of glory, for that is the Spirit's work, as to he is the Comforter; but I shall discourse of that faith which is common to all the children." See, Goodwin, *Justifying Faith*, 153.

will reveal that they did in fact affirm assurance accompanied faith in at least some form, not based on the strength of an individual, but on the power inherent in the object of faith.⁵³

Understanding the particularists' doctrine of assurance, which was later evidenced in Fraser's own doctrine of assurance, necessitates a twofold definition of assurance. On the one hand, there was the category of subjective assurance. This type of assurance, particularists maintained, did not accompany faith because it was a fruit of a reflex act of faith to grasp Christ's work in the life of the believer. This was the less reliable form of assurance, even though it was often more emphasized. Assurance flowing from the reflex act of faith waxed and waned as the believer encountered trials and temptations.

On the other hand, particularists affirmed there was an assurance in the direct act of faith, present because the object of faith justified confident believing. Rutherford explained,

The assurance of Christ's righteousness is a direct act of faith, apprehending imputed righteousness: the evidence of our justification we now speak of is the reflex light, not by which we are justified, but by which we know that we are justified.⁵⁴

Rutherford helps clarify the potential confusion between the Westminster Confession's statement that "infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith" and Calvin's position that "Faith is essentially a perswasion and assurance of the love of God to me in Christ, its more then I could ever learne to bee the nature of Faith, a consequent separable I believe it is."⁵⁵ One does not have to choose between the two types of assurance; there is an assurance which flows from Christ as the object of faith and the gift of God's love and an assurance which is strengthened through the Christian life in hopes that it will produce an infallible sense of one's belonging to God.

⁵³ Bonar reminds his readers that the theological foundation of Scottish particularism was laid in Genevan Calvinism, which according to the 1556 Geneva Catechism defined faith as both a knowledgeable assent and an assured trust. See, Bonar, H., *Catechisms of the Scottish Reformation* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1866), 121.

⁵⁴ *Dying*, 111. See also, Goodwin's remarks regarding the twofold nature of faith in Goodwin, *Justifying Faith*, 265.

⁵⁵ *WCF*, XVIII.3 and *Dying*, 85.

In his treatise *Spiritual Refining*, A. Burgess clearly relates the existence of these two aspects of assurance with the two acts of faith. In the direct act of faith, Burgess explained, the person perceives the sufficiency of Christ in the gospel offer and immediately adheres to him. The act of faith and assurance in the object to save are one in the same. The second act of faith, known as the reflex act of faith, “is when a man doth perceive and discern those *direct acts* in him, as when I perceive that I do thus adhere to Christ, that I do love God.”⁵⁶ This latter act of faith is the means by which personal assurance, or what the Confession called “infallible assurance,” is made possible.⁵⁷ The assurance which accompanies the reflex act of faith is considered to be more subjective, and according to Fraser less reliable, given that it rests upon an individual’s experience of faith in order to confirm the work of the Spirit.⁵⁸

There is little argument that the majority of works in the 17th century dealing with the subject of assurance aimed at teaching readers how to discover greater assurance through the reflex act of faith.⁵⁹ However, Calvin’s emphasis on the assurance which was of the essence of faith, and the particularists’ stress on the assurance which came as a result of obedience and the reflex act of faith, Beeke explains, were “largely quantative rather than qualitative.”⁶⁰ According to Beeke,

⁵⁶ Burgess, A., *Spiritual Refining: or a Treatise of Grace and Assurance* (London: A. Miller, 1652), 20.

⁵⁷ *WCF*, XVIII.3.

⁵⁸ “Now Assurance is a reflex act of a gracious soule, whereby he clearly and evidently sees himself in a gracious, blessed, and happy state; it is a sensible feeling, and an experimentall discerning of a mans being in a state of Grace, and of his having a right to a Crown of Glory; and this rises from the seeing in himself the speciall, peculiar, and distinguishing Graces of Christ, in the light of the Spirit of Christ, or from the Testimony and Report of the Spirit of God, the Spirit bearing witnesse with his spirit, that he is a Son, and an Heir apparent to Glory.” See, Brooks, T., *Heaven on Earth, or A Serious Discourse Touching a Well-Grounded Assurance* (London: M.S., 1657), preface.

⁵⁹ For example, Brooks stated, “If you would, Christians, attain unto assurance, then you must mind your work more than your wages; you must be better at obeying, then at disputing; at doing, at walking, then at talking, and wrangling. Assurance is heavenly wages that Christ gives, not to loyterers, but to holy labourers.” See, Brooks, *Heaven*, 246. Likewise, Gray remarked, “Diligence is the best way to make up your assurance with God.” Gray, A., *The Works of the Reverend and Pious Andrew Gray Formerly Minister on the Gospel in Glasgow* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1992), 414.

⁶⁰ Beeke, *The Relationship of Saving Faith*, 10. Beeke explained, “It is my position that the early Reformers and the Post-Reformers were not dichotomous on saving faith’s relationship to assurance; rather, their differences must be relegated to a newly evolving emphasis which allotted a greater sensitivity for a range of degrees in assurance due to the demands of the pastoral context, the seeds of which already lie in the theology of the magisterial Reformers.”

Calvin and the 17th century particularists were not at odds with respect to their doctrines of assurance. It was the pastoral contexts, competing theories of assurance, which dictated where the stress lay.⁶¹

Both Calvin and the particularists of the Post-Reformation understood, as Beeke explains, that “The subjective, if authentic, is always rooted in the objective.”⁶² There was, therefore, no inconsistency in Goodwin claiming that “Assurance depends on strict and holy walking, and so may be interrupted by our remissness and negligence” because he presupposed the initial grounds of assurance flowed directly from a sinner applying the blood of Christ to his conscience.⁶³ The fundamental reference point remained the perfect satisfaction of Christ, and therefore, Burgess rightly challenged his readers, “If thou hast no comfort from sanctifying grace, then make the more of justifying grace.”⁶⁴

Understanding the compatibility between Calvin’s and the Post-Reformation Reformers’ approach to the doctrine of assurance is critical to interpreting properly the methodology that Fraser employed when he combated the influence of Baxter’s theology on the doctrine of assurance. Fraser did not abandon particularism. He was very much dependent on the particularists’ decree-driven paradigm throughout the course of his writings. Failure to recognize Fraser’s dependence upon the particularists has compelled many modern scholars to assume Fraser was seriously inconsistent. Fraser was not inconsistent. He remained faithful to the foundational commitments of particularism, but he simply took the advice Bruggess gave in his approach to the doctrine of assurance. He turned greater attention to the comfort and assurance that came from “justifying grace.” He felt compelled to re-establish the validity of the assurance accompanying the direct act of faith because neonomianism effectively destroyed the possibility of such assurance through efforts to teach the conditionality of God’s decrees, the conditionality of Christ’s redemption, and the conditionality of the covenant of grace. The following section examines Baxter’s

⁶¹ Beeke writes, “Calvin was concerned largely with the assurance of God’s benevolence; the Puritans, with the assurance of personal faith. Calvin focused on the certainty of salvation in Christ; the Puritans dwelt on how the believer could be assured of his own salvation in Christ.” *AF*, 157.

⁶² *AF*, 156.

⁶³ Goodwin, *Justifying Faith*, 342 and 364. See also, *AF*, 156.

⁶⁴ Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, 400.

formulation of the doctrine of assurance in order to underscore the specifics of Fraser's objections.

5.5: Baxter's Doctrine of Assurance

Fraser sought to develop a more objective form of the doctrine of assurance in contrast to Baxter's view on assurance, which Fraser considered erroneously subjective.⁶⁵ Both Baxter and Fraser emphasized the importance of assurance of salvation, and both theologians exhorted their readers to seek personal assurance of faith. Fraser, however, vehemently disagreed with Baxter's approach to finding assurance. Baxter insisted that the grounds of assurance lay principally in how one responded to the conditional covenant, which established a new law.⁶⁶ The individual believer, therefore, became the provider of his own assurance. Fraser responded to Baxter by developing a doctrine of assurance aimed at establishing the fact that "The Foundation and Ground of Believing, and Comfort and Hope is without a Man, in Christ only."⁶⁷

Baxter rejected the notion that Christ was the only grounds of believing and assurance because he associated this teaching with Antinomianism, a doctrinal system Baxter passionately opposed. However, Fraser was not an Antinomian. Antinomianism was a teaching based on a deterministic view of God's decrees, wherein faith merely played the instrumental role of illumination of one's eternal justification.⁶⁸ The doctrine of eternal justification implied that justification occurred irrespective of any human involvement or response.⁶⁹ Consequently, faith did not operate instrumentally or conditionally, and therefore, assurance was not based on the direct or the reflex act of faith, but rather was a product of mysteriously discovering the eternal will of God.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Fraser lamented the effects of Baxterianism, writing, "What Ground they have given to the Enemies of the Grace of God to be more hardened in their Way, and to open their Mouth against Heaven more widely, fighting against the Gospel, while these seeming to be with us do secretly furnish our Enemies with Weapons and Authority with which they mortally wound the Truths of God." *JF*, 140-141.

⁶⁶ Neonomianism, or the doctrine of a new law, taught that Christ redeemed sinners, abolishing the obligations of the law under the covenant of works era and instituting a new law of faith.

⁶⁷ *SCSM*, 16.

⁶⁸ *JFSF*, 88. For a discussion concerning Baxter's objections to the doctrine of eternal justification, see, *RR*, 249-250.

⁶⁹ Crisp, T., *Christ Alone Exalted* (1832), II.119.

⁷⁰ *RR*, 252.

Baxter feared the Antinomians' doctrine of eternal justification would necessarily lead to apathy in the Christian life and provide greater license for sin. He reacted to Antinomianism, not by appealing to the early Reformers or to the arguments of his Reformed contemporaries, but by articulating a view of justification which stressed the obligation of an individual to justify himself. An individual would only be pronounced justified in accordance with his ability to obey the new law that Christ supposedly instituted through his work of redemption.

Another aspect of Antinomianism Baxter rejected was the concept that God's decree of election limited the scope of Christ's redemption. He maintained that Christ's redemption implied the same scope as the first Adam, all humankind. Just as with the first Adam, God covenanted through the second Adam, Christ, to save on the basis of a person's ability to fulfill specific stipulations. Justification, therefore, was dependent on the subject's response to Christ's conditional covenant.⁷¹

This emphasis in Baxter's doctrine of justification upon a person's performance had an inevitable impact on his doctrine of assurance.⁷² He separated assurance from justification, exhorting his readers, "We must not confound Justification with the assurance or feeling of Justification."⁷³ He recognized the possibility of assurance but only as a fruit of faith, not as something existing in faith or that was present at the moment of believing.⁷⁴ He wrote, "The great means to conquer this Uncertainty is Self Examination, or the serious and Diligent trying of the mans heart and state by the rule of Scripture."⁷⁵ He defined this test as "An enquiry into the course of our lives, but more especially into the inward Acts of our Souls, and trying of their Sincerity by the Word of God, and accordingly Judging of

⁷¹ Baxter's *Aphorismes of Justification* was first published in 1649. In it he clearly describes the tenets of neonomianism. According to neonomianism, Christ fulfilled the demands of the old and broken law and established a new law demanding faith and sincere obedience. Neonomianism, therefore, was a merely evangelical form of legalism. Baxter taught that Christ instituted a conditional covenant of grace, synonymous with the gospel promise, which communicated only the possibility of salvation rather than the certainty of it. See, *RR*, 193.

⁷² Baxter described faith and sincere obedience as the *mediums* which are necessary to gaining any type of certainty. See, Baxter, *The Saints Everlasting Rest*, 144-145.

⁷³ Baxter, R., *Of Justification* (London: R.W., 1658), 10.

⁷⁴ Baxter, *Baxter's Confession*, 21.

⁷⁵ Baxter, *The Saints Everlasting Rest*, 137. "Assurance is to be gained and kept by habitual self-examination, through which the faithful may discern the evidence of their own sincerity. True faith, which works by love and purifies the heart, can be infallibly discerned by careful introspection" See, *RR*, 189.

our Real and Relative Estate.” Baxter demanded that there be a trial of conscience in order for a believer to determine accurately, “Whether there be such an Act as Belief, or Desire, or Love to God, within us, or not.” Accordingly, discovering the grounds of assurance was an introspective exercise whereby “The Conscience...is able to feel and perceive its own Acts, and to know whether they be Real or Counterfeit.”⁷⁶

One must notice the difference not only between Baxter’s doctrine of assurance and Fraser’s, but also between the way Baxter approached the reflex act of faith and the method employed by many of the particularists in the 17th century. Both Baxter and the particularists taught that greater assurance came through dutiful obedience to God’s commands, though basing judgments on a cursory glance would be deceiving. These two perspectives on assurance were as incompatible as their doctrines of God’s decrees and justification. The particularists anchored their confidence in the complete sufficiency of Christ, and therefore, the reflex act of faith was the means by which believers were called to reflect upon Christ’s work in them and their growth in dependence upon Christ. Baxter, on the other had, insisted that faith and obedience were the object of faith, not Christ.⁷⁷ The believer, according to Baxter, looked not to Christ but must reflect on his ability to fulfill the law’s demands for himself, since Christ only secured the new law and did not fulfill it on behalf of the elect.⁷⁸

Assurance, according to Baxter, was not about believing in the efficacy of Christ’s redemption but about one’s determination to make use of Christ’s redemption. Therefore, assurance resulted not from Christ ‘for me,’ but rather from the person’s confidence in his acceptance of Christ’s conditional offer as well as his confidence that he had completed all the requirements that Christ’s law demands.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Baxter, *The Saints Everlasting Rest*, 138. Baxter explicitly stated that a person’s justification and warrant for assurance were based on where he was in the process of sanctification. See, 146.

⁷⁷ Baxter stated, “We are not speaking of the Certainty of the Object, or of the thing in it self considered; but of the Certainty of the Subject, or the thing to our Knowledge.” Baxter, *The Saints Everlasting Rest*, 140-141.

⁷⁸ Baxter explained, “I easily grant, that the *Sense*, or *Assurance* of Justification in our Consciences is wrought by the *Object* as an *Object*. Because this *Assurance* is a part of our *Sanctification*. But that Object is not directly Christs *Ransome*, but the Promise through his blood, and our *own Faith* which is the condition of that Promise.” *OJ*, 12

⁷⁹ Baxter, *Of Saving Faith*, 33.

The individual believer, therefore, became both the subject and immediate object of justifying faith and assurance, an indication of the legalistic spirit of Baxterianism.⁸⁰

When Fraser wrote his memoirs in 1676, he identified Baxterian legalism as the primary threat both personally and pastorally.⁸¹ Baxter's teaching, according to Fraser, posed a personal threat because neonomianism intensified his insecurities as to whether he would be accepted by God on the basis of Christ's merit. Baxter also created a pastoral dilemma, according to Fraser, because he led people away from Christ and back into a covenant of works. Fraser described with great anger the negative influence of Baxterianism,

I perceived a gospel spirit to be in very few, and that the most part yea of ministers did wofully confound the two covenants, and were of an Old Testament spirit; and little of the glory of Christ, grace, and gospel, did shine in their writings and preaching. But I abhorred and

⁸⁰ Fisher, author of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* which was originally published in 1645, documented the influence of legalism in the early to mid-seventeenth century. Fisher defined the 'legalist' as one who promoted the ideas that the Moral Law, which is summarized in the Ten Commandments, "ought to be the rule of life to a believer" and that God only promises blessings when the law is obeyed. Fisher, E., *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (London: G. Dawson, 1650), 4 and 9. Additionally, Brown recorded that the General Assemblies of 1645 and 1650 addressed ministers who "labour not to set forth the excellency of Christ...pressing duties in a mere legal way." Moffat, *James Hog*, 235.

⁸¹ Fraser attempted to stigmatize Baxter by associating his teachings with the Arminians, the Quakers, and the Roman Catholics. For example, see, *JF*, 31-32, 179, 181-182. When Thomas Mair accepted Fraser's interpretation of Christ's redemption, he also adopted Fraser's disgust for Baxterianism. Consequently, Mair frequently associated Baxter with Arminianism and other forms of unorthodox schemes of universal salvation, while defending Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption as unquestionably orthodoxy in response to the accusations of Adam Gib. See, Mair, T., *The Case Laid Open: or an Essay, to Satisfy Those Who Desire Information Anent the Strange Breach Between the Associate Synod and Mr. Mair*. (Edinburgh: 1764), 22, 29 and 60-61. For further discussion on the developments between Mair and Gib in the disruption which took place in the Associate Synod regarding Mair's support of Fraser's perspective on Christ's redemption, see, Forrester, D. M., *Adam Gib: The Anti-Burgher* (Reprinted from *The Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 1940), 17-19 and *DSCH&T*, 36-37, 356-357 and 538-539. It is recounted that "A more refined, and consequently, a more dangerous scheme of Arminianism was hatched and vented in England, by Mr. Richard Baxter; which, as it came nearer to the legal terms that some time before had been used by divines of reputed orthodoxy." Associate Presbytery, *Act... Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*, 18. Irrespective of Fraser's or Mair's stated abhorrence of Baxterianism, Gib attempts to establish a correlation between Baxter's and Fraser's views on redemption. In so doing, Gib wrongly presupposes that the fundamental issue at stake in the doctrine of redemption is its extent; therefore, the agreement between Fraser and Baxter is indisputable simply on the basis that both men include the concept of universality. See, Gib, A., *Act of the Associate Synod* (Edinburgh: W. Sands, A. Murray, and J. Cochran, 1755), 45 and *Case*, 29 and 60. This thesis will challenge Gib's presupposition that the extent of Christ's redemption is the defining factor of one's doctrine of redemption.

was at enmity with Mr. Baxter, as a stated enemy to the grace of God, under the cover of opposing some Antinomianism.⁸²

The source of Fraser's enmity was Baxter's stipulation that the covenant of grace "without Intervention of Act of the Creatures, cannot yield Ground of Assurance of Salvation."⁸³ He declared it unconscionable to claim that "All Assurance of Salvation is built upon Knowledge of our performing such and such a Deed, or having such and such a Grace, which necessarily accompanies Salvation." The result of which, according to Fraser, implied that "If a Man doubt, as ordinarily he will, he can have no well grounded Certainty."⁸⁴ Consequently, Fraser determined to expose the errors of Baxterianism and reinstate more biblical grounds of personal assurance.

5.6: Fraser's Synthesis

In this section, three key aspects of Fraser's theology will be examined: Fraser's conviction that the federal paradigm was the best mode of validating the sincere, gracious, and unconditional nature of God's promises made on behalf of Christ; the belief that the principal grounds for assurance are present in the direct act of faith as the believer apprehends the person of Christ; Fraser's distinctive doctrine of universal redemption, which he assumed allowed him to remain squarely in the realm of Post-Reformation orthodoxy while at the same time offering greater certainty to those who doubted their interest in Christ's redemption.⁸⁵ The analysis of these features of Fraser's theology will provide the information necessary to evaluate whether or not he was successful in his attempt to establish more objective grounds for assurance in the face of Baxterian opposition.

According to Fraser, Baxter's demand for a condition over and above those provided by Christ not only undermined the doctrine of assurance, but it also destroyed any hope of salvation. Fraser looked to Calvin for support against Baxter because Calvin clearly denounced the idea of human merit and the use of law in

⁸² *Memoirs*, 233.

⁸³ *JFSF*, 87.

⁸⁴ *JFSF*, 88.

⁸⁵ Critics of post-Reformation federalism see it as a form of legalism which cuts against objective assurance, rather than bolstering such claims. Bell, J.B. Torrance, and T.F. Torrance all identify Fraser as one who sought to correct the errors of 17th century federal theology. See, *Assurance*, 142; J.B. Torrance, *Covenant*, 55 and *ST*, 182.

justification.⁸⁶ Fraser agreed with Calvin that defending the reliability of God's promises was essential to establishing Christ as the only viable object of salvation and the only means for assurance in this life.

Fraser's disgust with Baxterianism was not surprising. He was an absolutist, like Calvin and other Post-Reformation particularists, and also a man struggling personally to discover more objective grounds for assurance. He, therefore, had a vested interest in denouncing the idea that the covenant of grace was merely conditionally given and Christ's redemption was only distantly connected with a sinner's salvation.⁸⁷

However, his construction of a new redemptive paradigm was unexpected. Throughout his writings Fraser appealed to Calvin and his Post-Reformation contemporaries, yet when mounting his defense against Baxter, he deviated from the more traditional formulation of the absolutists' arguments. He did so because he felt constrained by what he deemed to be the limitations of the typical particularist's perspective on Christ's redemption. Therefore, he broadened the extent of Christ's redemption while attempting to retain the foundational elements of particularism. Thus, Fraser's doctrine of assurance represented a unique synthesis of what some would judge to be mutually exclusive ideas.

Fraser's attempt at such a grand synthesis was motivated by the honest endeavor to create a more Christocentric foundation for assurance. He looked to Christ as a means of emphasizing the absolute nature of God's covenant of grace. Christ was at the heart of the gospel, and Fraser argued true, saving faith be built upon him alone.⁸⁸ The gospel demanded Christ be received and applied particularly by all sinners who desire to be saved. Only in a particular and personal application of Christ would the sinner be saved and receive the assurance that Christ and all his benefits were his. Fraser affirmed *sola Christos*: salvation and assurance must be in Christ and Christ alone. His doctrine of assurance and his doctrine of redemption, which represented the grounds of assurance, were formulated to the end that Christ

⁸⁶ Calvin stated, "Faith has been nullified and canceled if the promise of righteousness looks to the merits of our works, or depends upon the observance of the law." *Institutes*, III.xiii.3.

⁸⁷ *JFSF*, 58.

⁸⁸ Fraser writes, "It's an Error oftentimes in our Faith, that it is not built purely and only on the Grace of Christ." See, *JF*, 295.

would be shown forth to all and that through the clear presentation of Christ ‘for you’ that sinners would believe, be saved, and be assured.

5.6.1 God’s Covenant in Christ

The first tool Fraser employed in order to substantiate a more Christocentric foundation for salvation was the federal paradigm. A more extensive examination of Fraser’s view on the nature and application of the covenant of grace can be found in Chapter V, but here it is necessary to consider how the federal system affected Fraser’s views on assurance. The covenant of grace was an integral aspect of Fraser’s argument for assurance because in it Christ was represented as both subject and object. He was the one who secured the benefits promised, and he was also the one to whom sinners must look in order to share in such benefits.

Like the early Reformers, Fraser faced a pastoral context wherein the sufficiency of Christ’s righteousness for salvation was being questioned. Calvin and the early Reformers wrote in opposition to the legalism and sacramentalism of Rome, whereas Fraser was challenging the neonomianism of Baxter and his followers. Fraser was convinced a biblical view of federal theology provided a much needed defense against Baxter’s legalism.

According to Fraser, the covenant of grace described God’s offer of salvation based on the merits of Christ’s life and work.⁸⁹ He declared, “The Covenant of Grace is our Charter, by which we have Right to our Inheritance.” Thus, the covenant conveyed an unbreakable promise to which sinners could turn when doubting that God’s plan of salvation applied to them. Fraser maintained, “This is a marvellous Consolation to poor Souls, that know not what to do, that doubt of their Interest in Christ.”⁹⁰ Fraser reasoned that sinners could receive the covenantal promises of salvation with assurance because it was “His [Christ’s] Name [that was] made over by Promise and Covenant unto his People; and then it is a strong Tower, and Confidence, and Assurance may be built on it.”⁹¹ Fraser’s federal paradigm was

⁸⁹ *SCSM*, 22.

⁹⁰ *SCSM*, 44. Fraser added, “Faith is that by which we know, see and possess our Rights.” See Chapter V for further discussion of how faith functioned in the covenantal context.

⁹¹ *Meditations*, 8-9.

employed as a means of ushering his readers back to Christ and to the person who could warrant “full Assurance.”⁹²

In contrast to Fraser, Baxter’s covenantal paradigm communicated that Christ was only remotely related to a sinner’s interest in the covenant and even more distantly connected to a sinner’s receiving the benefits promised in the covenant. According to Baxter, Christ purchased a new covenant, another legal covenant. Therefore, Christ is assumed to have left the conditions of the new covenant unfulfilled, suspending the salvific benefits promised therein upon a sinner’s ability to meet the new law’s demands. This meant that the benefits of the covenant, namely salvation, were gained on the basis of merit. A sinner’s faith and obedience obligated God to save him, rather than salvation being a matter of grace from first to last. Thus, Fraser was justified in accusing Baxter of reformulating the covenant of grace into another covenant of works.

Fraser argued by contrast that Christ established a truly gracious covenant, wherein Christ himself supplied all the conditions required within the covenant.⁹³ He encouraged his readers, stating, “Yea believe to receive Strength from him, to perform what he requires; he hath engaged himself to this, and will perform it, if thou put him to it.”⁹⁴ Baxter argued that Christ lessened the requirements of God by completing the law which demanded perfection and instituting a law requiring faith and sincere obedience. On the contrary, Fraser maintained the standard which God stipulated in the law could never be lowered because it was a manifestation of the perfect character of God. Therefore, the graciousness of the new covenant was not related to its achievability but to Christ’s fulfillment of its demands on behalf of the elect. He became human that he might stand in humankind’s stead, so that in Christ a sinner might receive the righteousness of God.

5.6.2: The Nature of Faith and Assurance

The covenant functioned in Fraser’s doctrine of assurance as the means to authenticate the reliability of God’s promises and the right that God grants to all

⁹² *Meditations*, 8. Fraser explains, “For nothing but the Lord’s Promise can raise our Faith to a Confidence, and *full Assurance*, Heb. vi. 18. ‘Tis this only that can give strong Consolation to the Heirs of Salvation.”

⁹³ *JFSF*, 145.

⁹⁴ *JFSF*, 116.

sinner to “plead” the promises of God.⁹⁵ Following his arguments to establish the trustworthiness of the covenant and blessings it communicates to doubting sinners, Fraser explained that if a sinner was to benefit fully from the promises given in the covenant, he must rigorously seek to apply those promises personally and particularly. Though the gospel and the covenant of grace were preached generally to all, faith must move a sinner beyond the general. A sinner, if he is to be assured of God’s grace and favor, must believe Christ is not merely the Savior in abstraction but his personal Savior.

Fraser defined what it meant to apply particularly the promises of the gospel by contrasting them with a general assent to the sufficiency of Christ.⁹⁶ Though he often spoke of faith as an assent, Fraser challenged the notion that there was anything general about true saving faith.⁹⁷ The insufficiency of a general assent to save, Fraser maintained, was illustrated by the fact that even the devil demonstrated general assent to the truths of the gospel. According to Fraser, general assent did not constitute justifying faith, lest the devil be saved. Furthermore, general assent did not supply the warrant necessary for assurance of salvation, lest the devil be convinced of his acceptance by God. Fraser attested that justifying faith and assurance went hand in hand as the promises of God were particularly applied. Conversely, Fraser stated, “Without this particular Application there can be no Life, Strength, or Consolation.”⁹⁸

Fraser, therefore, deemed faith and assurance inseparable. As a result, assurance was not merely a product of faith but essential to the definition of faith. He explained, “In the same Instant that the Soul doth assent to the Truth of the Promises of the Gospel, the Will embraces Christ the Substance with Love, Joy, and great Heart Satisfaction.”⁹⁹ Love, joy and heart-felt satisfaction were indicative of the security a believer felt when embracing Christ for the first time. Assurance, according to Fraser, was not a progressive and developmental response to a growth

⁹⁵ *JFSF*, 82.

⁹⁶ *JFSF*, 89.

⁹⁷ *JFSF*, 15.

⁹⁸ *JFSF*, 68. Duncan Fraser recognized Fraser’s belief that the doctrine of particular application of the promises gave us grounds for confidence and rejoicing. See, *JFB*, 357.

⁹⁹ *JFSF*, 172.

in grace, but an immediate response to Christ personally received. Therefore, he declared, “There is some Measure of Assurance in all true and saving Faith.”¹⁰⁰

The insistence that there is some measure of assurance in true faith did not contradict Fraser’s argument that there remained two types of assurance.¹⁰¹ On the one hand, there was an objective assurance, spoken of thus far, which existed in the essence of faith.¹⁰² On the other hand, Fraser acknowledged that the fruits of faith or the sense of God’s work of grace produced a subjective assurance. The assurance of evidences of faith or the assurance generated from the reflex act of faith was what Fraser called the “assurance of sense.”¹⁰³ The assurance of sense was more subjective because it increased and decreased based on the believer’s ability to perceive the work of the Spirit in his life, and it is important to note that Fraser considered this fluctuation in the assurance of sense to be caused by sin and unbelief and did not reflect any instability in the objective grounds for assurance, namely Christ’s righteousness.¹⁰⁴

Uncertainty was not of the essence of faith, according to Fraser, because doubt is contrary to faith by nature.¹⁰⁵ He maintained, “Believers have Fears, but these Fears are not in their Faith, nor do proceed from the Uncertainty of the Object.”¹⁰⁶ The object of faith, namely Christ as he is offered in the gospel, represented complete satisfaction of the law. According to Fraser, full satisfaction should cast out all fear.¹⁰⁷ Christ warrants hope, not fear. Furthermore, he concluded,

¹⁰⁰ *SCSM*, 57. Thomas Boston also affirms, “There can be no saving faith without this persuasion in greater or lesser measure.” See, Boston, *Marrow with Notes*, 257.

¹⁰¹ *JFSF*, 59-60. These also related to Fraser’s categories of two types of faith—faith of assurance and the faith of dependence. Fraser concluded that a failure to reach full assurance was a failure of faith to depend on Christ alone. See also, *Mediations*, 13 and *JF*, 295.

¹⁰² Beeke explains, “The sense or feeling of assurance rises and declines in faith’s exercises although the seed of faith itself never fluctuates, for that seed is of God.” Beeke, *The Relationship of Saving Faith*, 16.

¹⁰³ *JF*, 145.

¹⁰⁴ One of the implications of Fraser’s doctrine of assurance was that he considered full assurance possible but argued that because of continued unbelief no sinner would actually perceive it to be achievable. This view of faith echoed Calvin’s conviction that “the smallest germ of faith contains assurance in its very essence, even when the believer is not always able to grasp this assurance due to weakness in being conscious of his faith.” See, *AF*, 60.

¹⁰⁵ *JFSF*, 44.

¹⁰⁶ *JFSF*, 63.

¹⁰⁷ Fraser set up the law and the gospel in opposition to one another. The first communicated judgment and was the source of fear. The latter conveyed hope and confidence. This dichotomous relationship

“Any Doubtings that may be, do not arise from the Nature of Faith itself, but from the extrinsecal [sic], heterogeneous, contrary Principles of Unbelief; wherefore, tho’ there be Doubtings in the Believer, yet are there none in Faith.”¹⁰⁸ Doubt and faith coexist but do not proceed from the same source. Doubts come from human weakness. Faith exists as a work of the Spirit.¹⁰⁹

Fraser was certainly aware that doubts were realities for many Christians. He knew there was not “a Perfection of Degrees in Faith, so as it excludes and overcomes all Doubtings.”¹¹⁰ Struggle with personal doubts is a key theme in Fraser’s own memoirs. He strongly challenged his readers to abandon all hopes that rest on the quality of their faith or obedience and instead to fight to lay hold of the only thing that offers any peace for the conscience, namely “the Merits of Christ.”¹¹¹ Weak faith produces weak fruit. Fraser lamented that many Christians stumbled along with very little assurance because they did not esteem enough the righteousness of Christ and their interest in the promises of God.¹¹²

Sin and unbelief, according to Fraser, rob believers of the full assurance, which was “the Lord’s End in the Dispensation of the Gospel.”¹¹³ Fraser reasoned that the Lord determined to make assurance one of the primary ends in the preaching of the gospel because once a sinner was convinced that he was secure and loved by God he would be all the more motivated to live in faithful obedience to God’s commands. Fraser argued this in direct opposition to Baxter, who feared absolute security would be taken as an opportunity for license and evil.¹¹⁴ Whereas Baxter emphasized the uncertainty of our interest in Christ in the hope it would lead to greater obedience, Fraser worked diligently to propagate the concept that assurance formed the foundation for joyful obedience. Consequently, Fraser exhorted his

between law and gospel is fundamental to understanding his disagreement with Baxter over the doctrine of justification and the doctrine of assurance. See, *JFSF*, 67 and *SCSM*, 15.

¹⁰⁸ *JFSF*, 47.

¹⁰⁹ *JFSF*, 71.

¹¹⁰ *JFSF*, 43 and 46.

¹¹¹ *JFSF*, 57.

¹¹² *JFSF*, 141-142.

¹¹³ *JFSF*, 96.

¹¹⁴ *JFSF*, 141.

readers to turn their attention continually to the promises of God, which were not naked promises but promises built upon the redemption in Christ's blood.

Christ's redemption served as the foundation of the promises because it was through Christ's redemption that the covenant of grace was established and the warrant for faith and assurance was embodied. Growth in assurance, therefore, came "by frequent and renewed Application of the Blood of Christ."¹¹⁵ Assuming what sinners needed was to be assured of their interest in the blood of Christ so that they could in turn apply the blood of Christ, Fraser developed a doctrine of universal redemption. The doctrine of universal redemption insured everyone could affirm "Christ died for me in some way."¹¹⁶ Fraser was convinced, rather than undermine objectivity as universalism did in Arminius' and Baxter's soteriology, his description of universal redemption would support his arguments for greater objectivity.

5.6.3: Universal Redemption

The doctrine of universal redemption was the most controversial of Fraser's theological contributions, and for good reason. It represented the point at which he departed from both Calvin and the particularists, none of whom had employed, at least explicitly, a doctrine of universality in order to substantiate the connection between assurance and faith. Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption also alluded to a concession made by Arminianism and Baxterianism, both of which affirmed the universality of Christ's redemption.¹¹⁷ Despite deviating from the norms of Reformed orthodoxy and venturing into a potentially more subjective aspect of Christology and soteriology, Fraser was convinced, "the universal Extent of Christ's Death doth yield a clear Ground and an infallible Evidence for the strongest Faith, so as to remove all doubting."¹¹⁸

Fraser's logic was simple: if there was any uncertainty as to whether or not Christ died for an individual, that individual could not be assured of his salvation.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ *JF*, 287.

¹¹⁶ *JF*, 203.

¹¹⁷ *JF*, 161 and 167.

¹¹⁸ *JF*, 201.

¹¹⁹ Fraser remarked, "The whole Case stands thus, The poor humbled Sinner despairing of Help from it self, Duties, or Creatures, and not knowing what to do; asks it what it would most gladly have? What would satisfie and content it? O, saith the Soul, if I had Christ, his Grace, Pardon and Holiness, and Reconciliation, I would be content, and I would give any Thing for this." *JFSF*, 69.

He assumed that his doctrine of universal redemption eliminated that possibility.¹²⁰ However, it was not the universality of Christ's redemption alone which provided the grounds of certainty. Baxter affirmed the universality of Christ's redemption, yet, in Fraser's opinion, conditional universality implied that Christ was not fully accessible to sinners. Christ was only given in part, not in whole. Fraser claimed Baxter's doctrine of redemption provided no grounds for assurance because he denied the possibility of receiving what Fraser deemed every sinner's greatest need, namely that Christ was personally and fully applied. As a result of the pervasive misinterpretation of Christ's redemption by Baxter and others, Fraser lamented the lack of sanctification, illumination, strength, and consolation in his day.¹²¹

The goal of the gospel, according to Fraser, was to publish the right for all humbled sinners to lay hold of the promises of God. He concluded the only sufficient ground for satisfying the conscience's demands for this warrant was to universalize the extent of Christ's redemption so no sinner could doubt whether Christ was given 'for me.' Fraser maintained that "the Revelation of the Gospel is certain and clear" and that Christ and his benefits were so demonstratively held out that it left no room for doubting.¹²² Christ's redemption meant that all sinners were entitled to believe confidently that Christ would truly be theirs.¹²³

Fraser's passion was evident on every page of his writings. Fraser was thoroughly convinced his position on Christ's redemption was biblical and helpful. He longed for others to witness the assurance which he had received from finally understanding Christ's redemption in terms of its universal accessibility. If asked how to comfort doubting sinners, Fraser would reply, "Tell them again of the Promises of Christ."¹²⁴

¹²⁰ *JF*, 145. Additionally, Como's comments on Culverwell's treatise, *A Treatise of Faith: Wherein Is Declared How a Man May Live by Faith*, parallel many of the same conclusions one could make regarding Fraser's argument for universalism. Como explained, "Culverwell's treatise represented an attempt to refocus the soteriological lens upon faith in Christ, and to shift emphasis away from legal works. But if assurance was to be had by looking to Christ, Culverwell reasoned, it was necessary to stress the fact that Christ had died for all; otherwise Christ's passion and death could hardly be seen as a source of security." See, Como, "Puritans, Predestination and the Construction," 73.

¹²¹ *JF*, 141.

¹²² *JFSF*, 27.

¹²³ *JF*, 199.

¹²⁴ *JFSF*, 69. Christ's redemption, Fraser argued, was the "Ground and Warrant of strong Consolation, Confidence and full Assurance." See, *JF*, 131.

5.7: The Weaknesses of Fraser's Concept of Assurance

Fraser's optimism was infectious, but also possibly blinding. Readers might be confused as to what exactly was so helpful about Fraser's doctrine of assurance. In the final section of this chapter, the limitations of Fraser's perspective on assurance will be addressed, and it will be considered whether Fraser was successful in producing his desired results of providing a foundation for a greater and more objective basis for assurance. The question Fraser should have asked himself was whether, by attempting to retain so much connection with Calvin and the Post-Reformation particularists, his ability to achieve his stated goals was hindered. Or, looking at it from the opposite angle, by broadening the extent of Christ's redemption did Fraser undercut the strengths of the particularists' position? Unfortunately, it appears that in his haste to satisfy his own existential anxieties, Fraser's doctrine of assurance self-destructed. That is not to say that his arguments were illogical or inconsistent, as some have maintained. However, it is clear that the strengths of his universalism were undermined by his commitment to particularism and that the advantages of his particularism were compromised by the broadening of Christ's redemption to include the reprobate.¹²⁵

The failures of Fraser's doctrine of assurance were the result of his trying to create *alia via media*, or another middle way, a middle way between universalism and particularism without embracing conditionalism.¹²⁶ The motivation for fashioning *alia via media* was the weaknesses Fraser identified in both his own particularist background and the overwhelming errors of Baxterianism and Arminianism. Fraser understood these systems had tremendous strengths, however, he wrongly assumed he could choose the best features from each system to create a new and more powerful argument for assurance. What he failed to realize was the strengths of these competing perspectives were not easily separated from their

¹²⁵ Depending on their views on the nature and order of God's decrees, theologians were more or less willing to embrace the language of reprobation. Fraser, whose avowed allegiance was to men like Rutherford and Durham, accepted that reprobation was an appropriate term. JF, 63, 75-77, 83, 87-88, 118, 123-124, 137, 148, 157-158, 159-160, 169, 171-173, 185, 187, 192, 195, 198, 206, 208, 213, 215-216, 218, 222, 223-224, 229, 233, 238, 242, 250, 253-254, 255, 260 and 262. Furthermore, Fraser unequivocally stated that though he broadened the extent of Christ's redemption, neither the redemption of the elect nor the reprobate should be considered conditional but absolute. See, 73 and 198. Thus, Fraser maintained, it "never was Christ's Intention or End to save Reprobates." See, 262.

¹²⁶ Fraser's *via media alia* did not seek a compromise between universalism and particularism as did hypothetical universalism. His theory, according to him, incorporated the best elements of both without relinquishing the absolute nature of Christ's redemption.

weaknesses, and by taking a piecemeal approach to his doctrine of redemption he ended up with more weakness than strength.

It is true that the particularists' position on Christ's redemption caused some of Fraser's contemporaries to struggle with the idea of presumption. Particularists did not speak often of a sinner's right to Christ and his benefits prior to faith. This was one of the potential weaknesses of limiting the scope of Christ's redemption. However, particularism, in its traditional form, also had its strengths. Believers were assured that Christ's redemption was absolutely efficacious to save. Those whom Christ redeemed would necessarily be given the faith to believe and God would persevere with them to make their salvation complete.

Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption unavoidably reduced the absolute efficacy of Christ's redemption, despite his efforts to the contrary. Fraser might have convinced sinners of their interest in Christ's blood, yet they were still left grappling with the question of whether or not Christ died 'for me' as one of the elect or as one of the reprobate. This type of tension was inherent in Fraser's doctrine of two-fold redemption. Shepherd's comments on the failings of Arminianism also expose a fundamental flaw in Fraser's theology. Regarding the doctrine of universal redemption, Shepherd stated, "This is sandy bottom and foundation, which when a Christian rests upon, it shakes under him, when the soul shall think, Though Christ hath died for me, yet no more for me than for Judas, or thousands of reprobates now in hell."¹²⁷ Fraser, unlike Arminius and Baxter, recognized a difference between the redemption of Christ for the reprobate and the elect; however, the uncertainty remained because the sinners could not perceive for which end Christ redeemed them. Thus, Fraser actually left sinners with the same lack of assurance of salvation which he sought to eliminate. He simply moved the question away from whether or not a person would make use of the prevenient grace supplied in Christ's redemption to the question of whether or not Christ's redemption was for one's salvation or for one's receiving greater wrath.

Though it is maintained that Fraser's 18th century critics were largely mistaken in their analysis that Fraser was an Arminian, it is conceded that they accurately concluded that Fraser's doctrine of redemption offered no new ground for

¹²⁷ Shepard, T., *The Sound Believer, A Treatise of Evangelical Conversion* The Works of Thomas Shepard (Vol. 1) (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1967), 193.

assurance and actually forfeited the strengths of particularism. Gib condemned Fraser's *alia via media*, stating, "Thus our *New-schemers*, after all their glorious Pretences to the contrary,--do really leave *no* Room or Warrant for any certain *Peace* or Forgiveness *through the Death of Christ*."¹²⁸ The Associate Synod, at which Fraser's writings were debated extensively, summarily concluded,

This new Doctrine of Faith, is for depriving it of all its Certainty and Assurance,—as to Pardon, Peace, and Acceptance to Christ. Because it can find no Certainty or Assurance about that Matter, unless it be in the Blood or Cross of Christ: But if he shed his Blood for all, and if one's Faith is to rest upon his Blood as thus shed for that Person among others; then Faith can have no Certainty, no Assurance about Pardon, Peace, and Acceptance through his Blood to the Person,—except these Blessings were sure through it to all.¹²⁹

These criticisms illustrate Fraser's failure to substantiate objectivity. Moreover, his doctrine of universal redemption led him in the opposite direction from which he wanted to go. He ended up much closer to Baxter's subjectivism than he realized.

5.8: Conclusion

It has been established that Fraser's quest for greater personal assurance was the driving force behind his writings and, in particular, his denunciation of Baxterianism. Fraser aimed to establish Christ alone as the condition for full assurance and confidence. To this end, he utilized the federal schema, presupposing that by anchoring the promises of God in the covenant of grace, he could convince all sinners of their right to claim the promises of God for themselves. Additionally, Fraser sought to strengthen his argument for greater assurance by employing a definition of faith which included assurance in its essence. He maintained that the direct act of faith, and not the reflex act of faith, was the fundamental source for assurance in salvation, given that assurance flowed from faith's object rather than faith's fruits in the lives of the believer.

It has been demonstrated that these two approaches were not innovations. They grew out of Fraser's dependence on Calvin and the 17th century particularists.

¹²⁸ *Act*, 41.

¹²⁹ *Proceedings*, 99.

However, Fraser ventured beyond the appeal to federalism and the link between faith and assurance, formulating a unique doctrine of universal redemption. He was convinced that only the universal scope of Christ's redemption could substantiate the more objective basis for assurance he sought. This deviation from the standard and accepted lines of reasoning established by both Calvin and the Post-Reformation particularists was not without its consequences. It will be argued Fraser remained, at least fundamentally, within the bounds of Reformed orthodoxy, but at the same time failed in his quest to substantiate the claims that his doctrine of assurance provided the keys to discovering greater personal assurance. Conversely, Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption undermined assurance by raising new questions about the efficacy of Christ's redemption and fostered the schemes which plagued the Reformed churches in Scotland for generations.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ See, *DSCH&T*, 36-37, 335 and 699; Couper, *A Breach*, 1-2; Macleod, *Scottish Theology*, 173-176 and Reid, *A Cameronian Apostle*, 196-197.

CHAPTER VI: GOD'S PURPOSE FOR CHRIST'S REDEMPTION

6.1: Introduction

It was argued in Chapter V that Fraser's quest for greater personal assurance was the driving force behind the development of his unique doctrine of redemption. The theological foundation upon which Fraser constructed his paradigm of Christ's redemption will now be examined. According to Fraser, God's eternal decrees served as the logical starting point for all discussions concerning Christ's redemptive efforts. He demonstrated an uncompromising commitment to the absolute sovereignty of God's decrees in governing both the act, and the ends for which, Christ redeemed all sinners.¹ He declared,

The Satisfaction that Jesus Christ made to divine justice is wholly bounded and ordered by the absolute Decree of God: So that Christ died for none, nor in any Sense, but for whom, and as the Lord purposed him to die, hence he is said to come to do his Father's Will.²

¹ Hastie emphasizes the importance of understanding the absolute nature of God's predestining purposes for the elect and reprobate as well as the volatile nature of the topic when he asserts, "The whole history of the dogmatic theology of the Reformed Church might be written under the one heading of the Principle of Absolute Predestination; it has been, generally speaking, at once the basis of all its orthodoxy and the indirect cause of all its schisms." Hastie, W., *The Theology of the Reformed Church in Its Fundamental Principles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1904), 224. See also, Fergusson, D. A. S., "Predestination: A Scottish Perspective," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 46 (1993): 457-78.

² *JF*, 170. Note the qualification "nor in any Sense," explicitly making the universal extent of Christ's redemption wholly dependent upon God's absolute purposes in Christ's redemption. This highlights an important point common to Fraser and other particularists. The foundation of redemption is Christological in nature, meaning that the decrees of God which establish an absolute promise are not made in abstraction from the person of Christ. Arminians and hypothetical universalists also acknowledge the primacy of the person and work of Christ in establishing the promise of salvation, yet these theologians argue that Christ's purposes were not absolute, and therefore, his redemption only provides the possibility of salvation, not its guarantee.

This statement by Fraser needs no qualification. He believed that the purpose and implications of Christ's redemption found their origin in the will and the decrees of the Father. Therefore, when seeking to understand Fraser's doctrine of redemption, one must first acknowledge the precedence of God's design for Christ's redemption.

An accurate interpretation of Fraser's doctrine of redemption has eluded many scholars both past and present because they have failed to recognize the primacy of God's decrees. This chapter will evaluate the effects of Fraser's strong stance on God's decrees and will anchor the interpretation of his perspective on Christ's universal redemption. It will seek to establish the grounds upon which to rectify the mistakes of these reductionistic interpretations, which have unjustifiably characterized Fraser's doctrine of redemption as a new incarnation of Arminius' universalism or of Amyraut's hypothetical universalism. It will be argued Fraser's dedication to the priority and the absolute nature of God's decrees represented a fundamental discontinuity between his doctrine of redemption and that of either Arminianism or hypothetical universalism.

Fraser was unequivocal in his denunciation of both Arminianism and hypothetical universalism, making scholars' attempts to force Fraser into one or the other of these categories all the more surprising. He stipulated his writings were aimed at undercutting the schemes of Arminianism and hypothetical universalism, which he referred to as "the Enemies of God's Grace."³ These enemies, as he called them, were those responsible for perverting the grace of God by making Christ's redemption merely preliminary, hypothetical and conditional. Conversely, Fraser maintained the only orthodox position was to uphold the absolute, purposeful and effectual character of Christ's redemptive efforts based on the supremacy of God's decrees.

³ *JF*, 140-141. It is acknowledged that Fraser had no specific reference to Amyraut, but does employ professors at the University of Saumur, generically, when speaking on the issue of those who recognize a broader application of Christ's redemption. See also, *JF*, 251. However, the continuity between Baxter's and Amyraut's perspective was established by Baxter himself. He professed adherence to the redemptive perspective outlined by both John Cameron and Moise Amyraut. See, *AJ*, 4-5 and Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, I.110. Therefore, according to Fraser, Arminians undermined God's grace and the true nature of Christ's redemption by placing too much emphasis on humanity's liberties. This resulted in God's being dependent on human choices, rather than humanity being submissive to God's purposes. Likewise, Fraser charged Baxter with teaching anti-gospel religion in light of his declaration that Christ redeemed only conditionally. Fraser also included Catholicism in his indictment of those who were enemies of God's grace, charging them with creating a religion based on human merit, replacing grace with sacramentalism.

Fraser's attempt to divorce himself from the so-called 'Enemies of God's Grace' by establishing a framework for Christ's redemption, which was governed from beginning to end by God's eternal decrees will be analyzed. It will be demonstrated that, despite the manner of expression, Fraser displayed a fundamental fidelity to the presuppositions of his orthodox contemporaries. Thus, it will be argued Fraser's unique doctrine of redemption justifies the formulation of a new classification, a *via media alia*, which included a two-fold particularism.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. First, Fraser's idea of the will of God, which stood behind the decrees, will be examined. Fraser's conception of God's will was sufficiently complex to account for both the universals God willed and the particular ends to which God ordained all things through Christ's redemption. Second, Fraser's arguments regarding the nature of God's decrees will be scrutinized in an effort to reveal the inextricable link between God's eternal purpose in sending Christ, Christ's determination to redeem all sinners and the actual effects of these purposes in the lives of the redeemed. Third, Fraser's understanding of the order of God's decrees will be assessed to illustrate the fact that he remained resolute in his commitment to the absolute nature of all God's purposes in Christ's redemption.

6.2: God's Will

Apprehending the will of God, according to Fraser, was a multifaceted endeavor requiring extremely detailed dissection.⁴ He used five headings to discuss the diversity within and complementary nature of God's will.⁵ An analysis of these components of God's will, as Fraser defined them, will assist in clarifying the true nature of Christ's universal redemption. The universal aspect of Christ's redemption, according to Fraser, was both real and necessary for achieving the assurance he so desperately sought for himself and his readers. Nevertheless, this section will reveal that all the universal aspects of God's will were subservient to God's *voluntas beneplaciti*, the will of God's good pleasure or God's sovereign predestining decree.⁶

⁴ *JF*, 60.

⁵ Fraser's original terminology has been retained because it is believed that by replacing the scholastic terminology with language that might be more common to modern scholars one would be in danger of losing the precision that Fraser's terminology offers.

⁶ Both the universal elements established innately through the perfection and all-sufficiency of Christ's redemption and the universal grace granted through the proclamation of the gospel, according

Consequently, according to Fraser, Christ's universal redemption did not produce a potential or hypothetical means of grace but rather served the two-fold purpose of supplying the necessary grace actually to save the elect and establishing the means by which the reprobate would be judged.⁷

6.2.1 The Volitive Acts of God

The first aspect of God's will that Fraser highlighted was what he referred to as God's "Volitive Acts," which were those elements of God's will said to be willed as immediate extensions of God's nature.⁸ The Volitive Acts of God, according to Fraser, were not voluntary acts of God's will. They were those things that God must will in order to be consistent with who he is. God cannot deny himself, and therefore, in some respect the parameters of what he can will are limited.⁹ Recognizing such limitations is not inconsistent with God's sovereignty because God's will, when it is

to God's *voluntas signi*, were secondary to God's *voluntas beneplaciti*, which determined how Christ's universal redemption would affect the eternal destination of both the elect and the reprobate. *Voluntas signi*, the will of sign or command, was the term that Fraser employed when speaking of God's revealed will. *Voluntas beneplaciti*, the will of good pleasure, was the term that he used when referring to God's decretive will, whereby God ordained how and whatsoever shall come to pass. Fraser was not unique in employing these terms. Muller refers to the *voluntass beneplaciti* as one of the standard classifications of the Will of God in orthodox systems, sometimes referred to as *voluntas complacentiae*. Muller also points out that both Rutherford and Wendelin stated that the distinction between *voluntas beneplaciti* and *voluntas signi* were "unanimously attested and rightly used by scholastics." For further discussion on the scholastic use of both *voluntas signi* and *voluntas beneplaciti* and the relationship between these two aspect of God's will, see, *PRRD*, III.457-459.

⁷ Election is "that eternal act of God whereby He, in His sovereign good pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, chooses a certain number of men to be the recipients of special grace and of eternal election." Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 114. Note that God's decree of election is to the specific end that the elect might truly be saved. In other words, God's intention in election is not simply to state his preference that the elect might be saved, but rather to authenticate his actual purpose to save them. Reprobation is God's decree "to pass by, and to ordain them [reprobate creatures] to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice." *WFC*, III.vii. Heppe explains that "reprobation includes two elements, *praeteritio* or a denial of grace not due, and *praedamnatio* or the appointment of punishment." Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 180. Note that the act of judgment and condemnation actually occurs as a result of sin, therefore is indirectly a part of the predestining decree. God does not actually condemn any without respect to their sin and fallen condition.

⁸ *JF*, 60.

⁹ Muller explains, "The essentialist aspect of theology which so powerfully enters the Reformed tradition in the generation after Calvin, rather than representing the incursion of a metaphysical impulse appears here as part of the establishment of a Trinitarian ground of theology, according to which the work of Father, Son, and Spirit is manifest as a unity and the relations of the persons *ad intra* correlate consistently with the revealed economy of the persons and with the revealed economy of salvation as effected in the common work of the persons *ad extra*." See, *Decree*, 101.

so constrained, is not governed by any external power or law but by the nature of God.¹⁰

Acknowledging the existence of God's Volitive Acts was more than a mere concession to his scholastic tradition.¹¹ Fraser was testifying to the internal consistency between that which God wills and who God is. According to his definition of God's Volitive Acts, God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—served as the foundation upon which all the decrees were issued. As a result, not only did Fraser recognize a certain ontological objectivity to the Godhead, but he also effectively eliminated the possibility of any substantial association with hypothetical universalism, a theory which arguably pits the Son's universal will to save against the will of the Father and the Holy Spirit, who will that only the elect should be given the means by which to be saved.¹²

Establishing God's ontological objectivity was integral to the development of Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption. It allowed Fraser the freedom to praise fully the person of Christ as Redeemer without introducing subjectivity into the ordinate ends for which Christ came. The fact that Christ was the infinite and eternal Son of God could not be denied, according to the Volitive Acts of God's will. The infinitude of Christ's person, therefore, necessarily communicated a universal quality to Christ's redemptive work.¹³ Fraser, however, was not content to relegate the universal quality of Christ's redemption to a hypothetical or to the realm of mere sufficiency. Hence, he developed a doctrine of universal redemption which incorporated both a purpose for the elect and a purpose for the reprobate. As a result, he believed that his doctrine of Christ's redemption was the most consistent with the Volitive Acts of God's will and God's *voluntas beneplaciti*, the will of God's good

¹⁰ *PRRD*, III, 454-455.

¹¹ God's Volitive Acts are related to what Muller refers to as the "*Voluntas necessaria*." See, *PRRD*, III.453.

¹² 'Ontological objectivity' was not a term that Fraser employed; however, it does explain the idea that runs throughout Fraser's doctrine of God, namely that God's choices are consistent with his constant and eternal being.

¹³ Davenant employed this same type of logic when arguing for his doctrine of universal redemption. "And God is abundantly satisfied in the death of Christ for the sins of the whole world, because the death of Christ was the death of God; the blood of Christ, the blood of God: Therefore from the infinite dignity of his person, the price of his blood and his flesh which he offered for us was infinite." Davenant, *Colossians*, I.168.

pleasure, whereby God sovereignly determined both the means and the ends of whatsoever shall come to pass.¹⁴

6.2.2 *Voluntas Beneplaciti*

Whereas the first feature of God's will dealt with what might be referred to as God's will towards God, God's *voluntas beneplaciti* or the will of God's Decree is that aspect of God's will whereby he ordains and providentially governs all that he has created. By it he determined to elect some and reprobate others, to send Christ as Redeemer and to establish the means by which he will accomplish everything that he decrees.¹⁵ These decrees themselves were not contingent, but absolute.¹⁶ By arguing for the absoluteness of God's *voluntas beneplaciti*, Fraser further distanced himself from hypothetical universalism and Arminius' doctrine of universal redemption. God's *voluntas beneplaciti* served as the foundation upon which one could confirm the efficacy of Christ's redemption, rather than the reverse.

Fraser labored to guard his doctrine of redemption from the errors of the overly subjective doctrines taught by Arminianism and hypothetical universalism, yet he was concerned not to create a strawman which his opponents could easily dismiss. Thus, he acknowledged the existence of real choice when it came to applying Christ's

¹⁴ God's *voluntas beneplaciti* must be considered as a product of *potentia dei ordainata*, not merely *potentia dei absoluta*. Rightly understood, God's *voluntas beneplaciti* was not a demonstration of naked power but of power wisely employed in order to bring God glory and impart grace to his people. See, D. C. Steinmetz, *Calvin's Theology, Theology Proper, Eschatology* 9, Gamble, R. ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992), 1. Arminius, whose view of God's will should be contrasted with Fraser's, claimed that God was so committed to allowing humans to make free choices that he did not decree actions or contingencies of human choices except in response to those choices. Arminius stated, "For the Divine decree itself, being an internal action of God, is not immediately the cause of the thing; but, whatever affects it may produce, it performs them by power, according to the mode of which a thing will be said to be either *necessarily* or *contingently*." See, *WA*, I.753.

¹⁵ Arminius denied that God's will constrains its object to perform any certain action. According to his doctrine of *Scientia Media*, Arminius argued that God wills the salvation or condemnation of a person only in response to his foreknowledge of that person's perseverance in the Christian faith. See, *WA*, III.555.

¹⁶ Fraser explained that all God willed according to his *voluntas beneplaciti* was "necessary and eternal." *JF*, 60. The claim that God's decrees are necessary and eternal is not a novel claim. Both Calvin and Arminius would agree with Fraser on this point, seeing that God for all eternity decreed whatsoever shall occur. For Calvin, this meant that God determined his plans for individuals independently. Arminius, on the other hand, argued that though the decrees were eternal and unchangeable, they were a product of God's foreknowledge, not his foreordination. Fraser's definition of God's decrees as being necessary and eternal, however, needs to be distinguished from Baxter and Amyraut's understanding of the term, especially as it relates to God's decree to save all of humankind. This decree, according to Baxter and Amyraut, is a conditional degree. See, *BTP*, 43; *AJ*, 4-5, 81-82, and 87 and *URM*, 32-33, 35, and 40.

redemption to an individual. This freedom of choice, however, did not contradict or compete with the sovereignty of God's *voluntas beneplaciti* but rather was established by it. According to Fraser the primacy of God's *voluntas beneplaciti* meant that God acted sovereignly but not always unilaterally. He urged his reader to "look upon it modally and as it terminates itself to the Object," and in so doing one realizes that the object was, indeed, free.¹⁷ In short, God's sovereign choices were manifested through the free actions of his creation.¹⁸ Thus, he employed the choices of the elect and the reprobate in response to Christ's redemption as secondary means through which he accomplished his *voluntas beneplaciti*.

The priority of God's *voluntas beneplaciti* did not imply accessibility to it. An individual's response to the will of God, therefore, was not judged on the basis of his conformity to God's *voluntas beneplaciti*, but rather to God's *voluntas signi*, the revealed will of God. Whereas God's *voluntas beneplaciti* indicates whatsoever will come to pass, God's *voluntas signi*, or the revealed will of God, discloses who God is and what he requires of his creation.¹⁹

6.2.3: *Voluntas Signi*

Since the *voluntas signi* comprised in part the commandments of God, Fraser felt it appropriate at times to refer to God's *voluntas signi* as God's conditional will. However, the reality of condition within God's *voluntas signi* did not imply that God's *voluntas beneplaciti* was somehow contingent upon the responses of his creatures. It simply conveyed the fact that God ordained to carry out his sovereign purposes through both the acts of obedience and disobedience to his *voluntas signi*.

God's *voluntas signi*, therefore, did not always reflect God's ultimate purpose for a given means or a particular command. The outworking of the relationship between God's absolute *voluntas beneplaciti* and his conditional *voluntas signi* is noteworthy with respect to how they influence interpretations of Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption. God's *voluntas signi*, communicated in the gospel, proclaimed that all who respond to Christ's redemption with faith would be saved from their sins

¹⁷ *JF*, 60.

¹⁸ Fraser's understanding of God's sovereign good pleasure will be further examined in Chapter VI of this thesis when it will be scrutinized against his thoughts regarding the fulfillment of the conditional elements of the covenant of grace. See, Section 6.2 of this thesis.

¹⁹ Fraser explained that there is no other objective testimony to the revealed will of God than that which is delineated in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. See, *JF*, 8.

and inherit eternal life. God's *voluntas signi* revealed a single desired end for Christ's redemption.²⁰ Nevertheless, this desired end for Christ's redemption was secondary to God's decreed end for Christ's redemption, which included a two-fold aim for Christ's redemption. According to Fraser, Christ's redemption was ordained as the means by which the elect would be provided all that was necessary to receive and apply salvation. God also designed the rejection of Christ's redemption as the means through which reprobates would incur the wrath of God leading to their condemnation.²¹ Thus, the two-fold nature of God's absolute and unchangeable *voluntas beneplaciti* manifested itself in a doctrine of two-fold redemption, or what Fraser chose to refer to as universal redemption.²²

The decree to employ Christ's redemption in this two-fold manner was certainly unique among Fraser's contemporaries, and many of his critics, both contemporary and modern, have voiced their disagreement with the suggestion that God ordained Christ's redemption as a means of judgment.²³ Despite these objections, however, no inconsistency between God's *voluntas signi* and God's *voluntas beneplaciti* has been proven. God's *voluntas beneplaciti* remained absolute. God's *voluntas signi*, through conditional in form, was employed according to God's absolute ends. Consequently, Fraser's arguments regarding God's *voluntas signi* and God's *voluntas beneplaciti* served to create a distance between and the Arminians and the hypothetical universalists, and established greater continuity between his theory of redemption and that of the particularists.

²⁰ Fraser's argument regarding "sufficient objective grace" and "sufficient subjective grace" parallels this discussion of God's *voluntas beneplaciti* and God's *voluntas signi*. See, *JF*, 297-298.

²¹ It is important to note that Fraser does not claim that salvation of the elect and condemnation of the reprobate are equal aims in the preaching of the gospel. The condemnation of the reprobate is an accident of the gospel published, not the primary focus. See, *JF*, 82-83.

²² Much of the controversy surrounding Fraser's doctrine of redemption revolved around his decision to employ the term 'universal,' which, to his particularist contemporaries, undeniably echoed the systems proposed by Arminian universalists and hypothetical universalists.

²³ Per the Westminster Confession's treatment of Christ as the Mediator, which is closely associated with his being Redeemer, Christ will judge in the last judgment as Mediator. Fraser, therefore, deduced that it would not be out of accord with the Westminster Standards to affirm that Christ, in fact, redeemed some with intent to communicate a gospel or redemptive wrath. See, *WCF*, VIII.1,4.

6.2.4: *The Will of Complacency*

The fourth distinction that Fraser acknowledged concerning the will of God was what he referred to as “the Will of Complacency in God.”²⁴ Fraser understood the will of complacency as that aspect of God’s will whereby everything that occurs in the world is pleasing or consistent with God’s Nature and Will. Through this aspect of God’s will Fraser sought to demonstrate once again the compatibility between God’s *voluntas signi* and *voluntas beneplaciti*, and ultimately justify his complex theory of redemption, by reconciling both God’s revealed will and his decretive will with his nature.²⁵ He recognized that there was a certain tension between the fact that God did not delight in the condemnation of a sinner and the reality of God’s predestining the reprobate to eternal wrath.²⁶ He assumed that the supposed conflict between God’s mercy and his sovereign decree could be resolved by respecting that both acts of mercy and justice were consistent with God’s nature.²⁷ The will of complacency in God, as Fraser termed it, expressed God’s right both to show mercy to the elect and to pour out his wrath on the reprobate without internal contradiction.²⁸ Any theory of redemption, according to Fraser, that was biblically defensible must account for the complementary nature of all God’s attributes with all of God’s actions.

The employment of God’s will of complacency functioned to safeguard Fraser from the accusation his doctrine of two-fold redemption included overt contradictions. He explained any confusion regarding his theory of two-fold redemption resulted from a failure to recognize the diverse ends for which God decreed Christ’s redemption. Concerning the consistency of God’s will in sending Christ, Fraser argued,

When the Lord invites, exhorts, expostulates, complains, grieves, he expresses his gracious and holy Nature, not the Will of his Decree; nor

²⁴ *JF*, 61.

²⁵ The Latin, ‘complacere,’ means ‘to please.’ Fraser’s affirmation of the will of complacere was significant in light of the contrast with hypothetical universalism, which embraced at least some form of inconsistency or competition in the decrees.

²⁶ *JF*, 63. Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11. Fraser wrote, “Punishment of damned Reprobates, is not a Thing in its own Nature, or as it is the Creatures Torment pleasing to God.”

²⁷ Fraser stated, “There is a relative Will of Complacency, which is as it were the Suitableness, Agreeableness and Harmony of God’s Nature with any Thing.” *JF*, 61.

²⁸ *JF*, 63.

are there therefore contrary Wills in God, but one and the same Will diversly manifested on various or the same Objects diversly and variously considered.²⁹

His unwillingness to accept the possibility of inconsistencies among the *voluntas beneplaciti*, the *voluntas signi* and God's nature is further evidence that Fraser was dissatisfied with hypothetical universalism, a theory which promoted the concept that God initially decreed to save all humankind, and only later did he reverse his decision, limiting the application of salvation to the elect. Supporting this theory of redemption, Amyraut made no attempt to reconcile God's apparent change of mind and God's unchangeable nature. His only response was to seek refuge in what he called mystery. Fraser, however, unlike Amyraut and the other hypothetical universalists, was unrelenting in his conviction that his doctrine of universal redemption made no suggestion that God compromised his own nature or undermined the purpose for which Christ came into the world.

6.2.5: The Virtual Will of God

The characteristic of God's will which he termed "the virtual Will in God" is the final aspect of God's will that will be examined in this section. One must be careful to distinguish the virtual will of God from both the *voluntas beneplaciti* and the *voluntas signi*. It should not be associated with either God's decree to a particular end or God's command by which God expressed his desire for a particular end. The virtual will of God related to the constitution of a means, which by nature tended towards an end. Fraser explained that if God constituted a means in such a way that it innately flowed to a particular end, though never actually willing the end for that means, then "he [God] may virtually be said to will that End."³⁰

Given the fact that the virtual will of God was neither indicative of God's command nor his decreed end for said means, the acknowledgement that God's constituted means did not always attain the ends to which by nature they actually tended was not an indication of actual conditionality. According to Fraser, his doctrine of the virtual will in God could not be used to undermine the absolute nature of the *voluntas beneplaciti*. He maintained that all means do not find the ends to

²⁹ *JF*, 77.

³⁰ *JF*, 63

which by nature they tended, precisely because God never purposed they should attain the end.³¹

Fraser's use of the image of the city of refuge illustrated the complementary nature of God's virtual will and the *voluntas beneplaciti* within his doctrine of universal redemption.³² According to Numbers 35, God instituted the cities of refuge in order to provide a secure haven for those guilty of causing another Israelite's accidental death. Persons were safe so long as they remained in the designated cities. Fraser equated the establishment of these cities with God's provision of a means of forgiveness in Christ's blood. He exhorted his readers by writing, "See hence the Necessity of fleeing unto the Blood of Christ, this City of Refuge, only in him is help, only in him thou canst find a Remedy."³³

As with the cities of refuge, a guilty person might decide to relinquish his right, or, in other words, not to use the means for which they were designed. This, however, did not diminish the sufficiency of the city to provide a haven to all who wished to come. Applying the same logic, Fraser declared that Christ's redemption, which was inseparably tied to the all-sufficiency of Christ's blood, established an objective right to the promises of salvation for all within the visible church. Nevertheless, how the elect and the reprobates responded to their right to salvation was determined entirely by the *voluntas beneplaciti*. He explained, "In Respect of God's Decree, a few only are appointed to receive Benefit by him; and so was the City of Refuge too, appointed for all tho' secretly intended for the Benefit of some only."³⁴

Fraser considered all created things to point people towards God by virtue of the fact that anything that is created has a nature, an essence, and an ontologically objective quality.³⁵ If everything has an innate purpose linked with its objective

³¹ *JF*, 61.

³² Fraser employed "the City of Refuge" illustration consistently through his several theological treatises. See, *JF*, 109; *JFSF*, 198-199, *SCSM*, 4; *Meditations*, 163. Thomas Shepard, the New England Reformer upon whom Fraser depended heavily, also utilized the imagery of the City of Refuge in his theological discourse. See, *Laird*, 172. Thomas Mair also picked up on this illustration in his defense of Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption before the Associate Synod in the 18th century. See, Mair, *Reasons of Thomas Mair*, 58-59.

³³ *Meditations*, 163.

³⁴ *SCSM*, 8.

³⁵ Parallels can be made between Fraser's concept of the virtual will of God and the remarks previously examined regarding the Volitive Acts of God. The connection between God's Volitive

constitution, then the same holds true for the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ, shed during the work of redemption, had an inherent saving quality. Fraser reasoned that in some respect, it could be stated that God virtually willed the salvation of all humanity, since he argued that Christ redeemed all. This aspect of God's will has been the source of much confusion and most likely has been the catalyst for much of the misinterpretation of Fraser's doctrine of redemption throughout the centuries. The virtual will to grant salvation to all humankind based on the blood of Christ resembles the arguments by men like Cameron, Amyraut and Baxter.

Despite any resemblance, stating that God virtually willed to save all mankind based on the objective sufficiency of Christ's shed blood was categorically different than claiming that God actually decreed to save conditionally all mankind. There was a difference, Fraser declared, between the "The End of Christ in coming" and "the End of the Coming of Christ."³⁶ The end of the coming of Christ was for the redemption of sinners to be brought to God. The end of Christ in coming, however, was determined from all eternity by the *voluntas benepliciti*, namely that some will be brought to salvation and some will receive God's condemnation.³⁷ Commenting on God's purpose for Christ's universal redemption, Fraser stated,

God by the Will of his Decree wills not the Salvation of all Men, he doth not purpose to save all Men, for then should all be saved, for he hath decreed and it came to pass, yea God hath decreed that the most of Men shall be eternally damned and perish.³⁸

The significance of statements like these cannot be discredited. Fraser's uncompromising commitment to double predestination meant that God's virtual will supplies no information as to whether or not God actually decreed a particular end. Thus, the virtual will of God represents merely a scholastic addition, functioning to reaffirm the all-sufficiency of Christ's redemption.

In contrast to Fraser's more orthodox position, within hypothetical universalism there was a temporal or at least logical progression within God's

Acts and God's virtual will related to Fraser's emphasis on the substantial aspect, or the material aspect of the created object.

³⁶ *SCSM*, 11.

³⁷ *JF*, 262.

³⁸ *JF*, 62.

voluntas beneplaciti, because God's initial will to redeem and save all mankind did not come to fruition. This introduced the idea that the Father's and the Holy Spirit's intentions in redemption differed radically in design from those of the Son and the notion there was progressive development within the decree of God. These assumptions were judged by Fraser and other particularists to be a heresy of the highest order. They would not stand for a doctrine of redemption that included the teaching that there was competition among the persons of the Godhead and that the *voluntas beneplaciti* was anything but absolute.³⁹

This section has demonstrated how the five categories of God's will highlighted by Fraser influence the proper interpretation of his controversial doctrine of universal redemption. The multidimensional, yet congruous quality of God's will, as described by Fraser, illustrates to why and how he developed such a complex theory on Christ's redemption. God's will found its expression in God's decrees, and it was the decrees, Fraser argued, that governed the nature and extent of Christ's redemption.⁴⁰ The final sections examine Fraser's theology of both the nature and order of God's decrees.

6.3: The Nature of God's Decrees

Fraser's unyielding allegiance to the absolute nature of all that God decreed will be scrutinized, exposing further dissimilarities between Fraser's theory on Christ's redemption and those with whom he has frequently been associated and revealing a strong correspondence between Fraser's doctrine of Christ's redemption and those who espoused a more traditional form of particularism.⁴¹

The voluntary nature of God's decrees must be acknowledged because God retained complete freedom in all his choices. According to Fraser, the only limiting

³⁹ Nicole explains that particularists consider it inconceivable to assume that a particular salvation for the elect is compatible with a prior decree to universally redeem all sinners for the purpose of salvation. See, Nicole, R., "The Case for Definite Atonement," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society [BEST]* 10, no. 4 (1967): 203-204.

⁴⁰ The decrees are absolute, i.e., the dominating factor as to whether the redeemed are saved or lost. – disagreeing with Arminius at this point. Muller points out that post-Reformation theology generally taught that there was essentially no distinction between God's decree and his will. See, *PRRD*, 469.

⁴¹ Fraser taught double predestination, common among most particularists in the 17th century. However, rather than limiting Christ's redemptive purposes to the elect alone, he formulated a unique doctrine of two-fold redemption. According to Fraser's two-fold view of Christ's redemption, Christ redeemed the elect with the purpose to save them from their sins and bestow all that was needed for eternal life, yet redeemed the reprobate to judgment and greater wrath.

factor was God's nature.⁴² God cannot deny himself, and therefore, one who turns to God can be assured that he will not act capriciously. Nevertheless, he always acts freely, without any eternal constraint.

The voluntary nature of God's decrees served as the foundation of Fraser's argument that God's determination to send Christ as Redeemer was utterly gracious. God made a totally independent and benevolent choice to create man. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit could have chosen not to create. God did not choose to create because he was lonely, nor did he make such a choice because he lacked something. Like the choice to create, God was also free with respect to his decision to offer eternal life. The offer God made to humanity's first parents was not granted on the basis of innate right or merit; it was a promise given by a gracious Creator. Moreover, nothing but the grace and mercy of God could explain God's resolve to redeem humanity after their first parents' rejection of the offer of salvation, choosing to eat of the forbidden tree.

God not only demonstrated the freeness and graciousness of his decree in choosing to redeem but also in the means chosen by which he would offer salvation anew. Fraser contended, in agreement with scholastic theologians like Rutherford, that God did not necessarily have to choose to redeem the world through the death of his Son.⁴³ God had absolute freedom in determining the means, manner and method of salvation. Fraser affirmed that "God might have made any other Thing the Condition of Life and Justification."⁴⁴ Not only could God have chosen any other

⁴² Rutherford took voluntarism a step further by declaring that God's actions *ad intra* did not necessarily have to be reflected in God's decrees *ad extra*. In other words, though God is by nature just, he did not necessarily have to act justly to his creation. It was only after God decided to act justly *ad extra* that he was compelled to act justly. Likewise, Rutherford argued that God must love himself, yet he was not under any obligation to act in a loving manner towards his creatures. See, Rutherford, S., *The Covenant of Life Opened, Or A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (Edinburgh: 1655), 31. Fraser seemed to disagree with Rutherford on this point.

⁴³ John Macleod referred to Fraser's dependence on Rutherford in the formulation of his doctrine of voluntarism. Macleod, however, also noted that very few in Scotland seemed to take up the position. See, Macleod, *Scottish Theology*, 71. The more popular position regarding the relationship between God's nature and his decision to save was propagated by John Owen. Owen, to whom Fraser appealed as one of the theologians whom he considered to be a protector of orthodoxy in continuity with the first Reformers regarding the doctrine of the redemption, denied a voluntarist reading of God's decree to redeem. Owen stated that the nature of sin demanded the specific sacrifice that was offered through Christ's redemption. In other words, once God decided to redeem, it was inevitable that Christ had to be given up. See, Owen, J., *A Dissertation on Divine Justice* (1653).

⁴⁴ *JF*, 323.

thing to be the instrument used to confer salvation, but “God might have saved us without the Intervention of any Means at all, had he pleas’d.”⁴⁵ He wrote,

But this is true in *sensu composito* only and *ex consequenti*, in which Sense it was impossible to *Adam* to forbear eating the forbidden Fruit, for the Decree of God cannot be broken, yet it is not true in *sensu diviso*; for simply and absolutely God could or would save *Judas* or *Cain* if he believed.⁴⁶

Prior to God’s decree to reprobate, therefore, God could have chosen whosoever he desired to be saved, but following his decree to reprobate, all those will necessarily be condemned for their sin.

The voluntary nature of God’s decision to send the Son as Redeemer emphasized the gravity of God’s investment in humanity’s redemption. God’s choice to redeem sinners through such painful and costly means, according to Fraser, served as irrefutable evidence of the authenticity of God’s offer that whosoever would come would receive eternal life. The voluntary nature of God’s decree, therefore, provided the foundation upon which Fraser built his argument for an assurance which immediately accompanies faith.⁴⁷

In addition to substantiating a sinner’s confidence in the willingness of God to follow through his promises to save, Fraser maintained that the Father’s voluntary choice to send the Son also supplied the basis upon which sinners should conclude that God will be faithful to punish those who reject his gracious offer. The fact that God made the costly decision to provide redemption through Christ imposed a weighty responsibility on the sinner who heard the gospel.

Thomas Shepherd, the New England Puritan, to whom Fraser was greatly indebted theologically, explained the relationship between God’s freedom in

⁴⁵ *JFSF*, 12.

⁴⁶ *JF*, 198.

⁴⁷ Fraser’s appeal to the voluntarism as the source of greater assurance highlights the fact that he did not assume that the voluntary nature of God’s decree threatened the absoluteness and stability of the *voluntas beneplaciti*. The doctrine or teaching of voluntarism cannot be employed as a means of undercutting the necessity of Christ’s redemption and the necessity of a sinner’s response of faith to the good news of Christ’s sacrifice for sins. When God chose to decree, the narrow road to salvation was unalterably established. Fraser explained that God’s decree was “an immutable, sure, and eternal Decree,” and thus, a solid foundation upon which to build a trustworthy offer of salvation, leading to greater assurance. See, *Meditations*, 152.

choosing Christ as the only of means of salvation and the necessity of responding to the offer of salvation. He wrote,

God, as a Creator, having made a law, will not forgive one sin without the blood of Christ; nay, Christ's blood will not do it neither, if thou dost join never so little that thou hast or dost unto Jesus Christ, and makest thyself or any of thy duties copartners with Christ in that great work of saving thee. Cry out, therefore, as that blessed martyr did, None but Christ, none but Christ.⁴⁸

Shepard characterized God's decree to send Christ voluntarily as an act of instituting a 'law' in Christ's blood. It will be by this new law that all humanity will be judged.

Fraser challenged his audience never to stop pursuing salvation in Christ. He, having experienced a great deal of personal doubt concerning his salvation, exhorted even those who considered themselves to be destined to be rejected by God to continue to lay hold of the gospel promises rather than speculate about the unknown or to worry about that which they could not control.⁴⁹ Prior to faith in Christ, whether a sinner was elect or reprobate was unknowable, therefore, the *voluntas beneplaciti* should neither deter a sinner from faith nor warrant a sinner to believe. Warrant to believe rested on the universal offer and right to salvation communicated through the proclamation of the gospel. Consequently, Fraser taught that the only available grounds for determining whether a person was going to hell or heaven was the choice that person made in light of God's invitation to embrace Christ as offered in the gospel.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Shepherd, *The Sincere Convert*, 48.

⁴⁹ He contended, "Thou hast nothing adoe with Election or Reprobation, thou art to consider theyself abstractly from both, neither as elected or reprobated; but as a fallen Sinner in *Adam* who Christ is sent to save, and to whom his Philanthropy or Mankind Love hath appeared; the secret Things belong to God, his command is my Rule; not what is his Intention, which as I cannot know for the present, so I am not called thereunto." See, *JF*, 75.

⁵⁰ In the section dedicated to expounding the benefits that are grounded in the gospel offer, Fraser stated, "A faithful Engagement upon Condition of Believing that the Soul shall actually possess all these Things offered unto it in the Gospel, and that they shall assuredly be made forthcoming to the Soul which doth believe." *JF*, 11.

The gospel, according to Fraser, communicated an absolute and irrevocable right to the promises of God for salvation.⁵¹ By making the right to Christ absolute, Fraser attempted to console the believer that resting in Christ was never a presumptuous act. Fraser explained, “the Right it self be not but absolutely given.”⁵² He reasoned the only legitimate means by which to warrant an absolute right for all sinners to come confidently to Christ for salvation was to broaden the parameters of Christ’s redemption beyond the elect. The universal design of Christ’s redemptive work implied that it was impossible to receive the offer of salvation presumptuously. According to Fraser, “This Doctrine [universal redemption]...only warrants us to come confidently to a Throne of Grace, and thankfully accept of Christ and his Grace, and to make use of them as our own.”⁵³

In addition to the irrevocability of God’s decrees, however, the quality of absoluteness also referred to the autonomy God demonstrated in decreeing. God’s decisions, according to Fraser, rather than being dependent on anything outside of himself, were completely independent from external influence so that everything that happens in the world was a direct consequence of his decree. Absoluteness was more than independence, more than temporal primacy; it was also illustrative of God’s unqualified sovereignty in determining whatsoever came to pass.

The absolute sovereignty of God’s decrees retained primacy in Fraser’s theory of redemption and distinguished his concept of the universality of Christ’s redemption from that of both Arminius and the hypothetical universalists. Unlike Arminius, Fraser rejected the notion that God’s decree to elect and to reprobate was based on foreknowledge of how individual sinners would respond to the offer of salvation. Similarly, Fraser argued against hypothetical universalists’ subordination of God’s electing decree to the universal scope of Christ’s redemption, maintaining that their conditional theory of redemption created an inconsistency between the purpose of Christ and the purpose of the Father and the Holy Spirit with respect to the outcome of Christ’s redemption.

⁵¹ The right to justification, according to Fraser, was given without condition to every human being. Justification and the appropriation of all other benefits promised in Christ, however, were granted only to those who were given the gift of faith. See, *JF*, 120.

⁵² *SCSM*, 36.

⁵³ *JF*, 100.

Fraser clarified his firm commitment to the particular aims of God's act of double predestination, stating,

God by the Will of his Decree wills not the Salvation of all Men, he doth not purpose to save all Men, for then should all be saved, for he hath decreed and it came to pass, yea God hath decreed that the most of Men shall be eternally damned and perish: By this general Good-will we are not to understand any general indefinite or universal Election.⁵⁴

Fraser's critics, however, questioned the consistency of his holding to the doctrine of absolute, double predestination while also delineating a doctrine of two-fold redemption. He anticipated these objections and in response appealed to the unity and singularity of all God's decrees.⁵⁵ Understanding that according to the accepted orthodox position there was neither "Priority nor Posteriority" in God's purposes, Fraser argued that theologians could not justifiably separate God's acts of election and reprobation from his decree to establish a covenant of redemption.⁵⁶ In decreeing, God ordained both the end and the means. It was not a violation of this principle, he maintained, to include Christ's redemption, or more accurately an individual's response to Christ's redemption, as a means of both election and reprobation. He explained, "For tho' Sin or Unbelief be not the Cause of God's Decree of Reprobation, yet is Unbelief the Mean thro' which the Decree is execute, and therefore is the Decree respective of it."⁵⁷ The decree was not dependent upon the response of the individual, as in the Arminian theory of redemption, yet it was understood by Fraser as the means by which God executed his decree.⁵⁸

Fraser demonstrated that his redemptive paradigm was logically consistent with his stance on the absolute, double nature of God's elective decrees. The need to reconcile Fraser's employment of Christ's redemption as a means through which God expressed both love and wrath, however, remained. Neither those who criticized

⁵⁴ *JF*, 62.

⁵⁵ Fraser predicted that some would ask, "How is it conceivable that ever the Lord Jesus should undertake to die for these whom before he never proposed to save, but ordained to destroy?" *JF*, 253-254.

⁵⁶ *JF*, 254.

⁵⁷ *JF*, 255.

⁵⁸ For details related to Arminius' doctrine of God's decree, see, *WA*, 550.

Fraser from a traditional particularist view of Christ's redemption nor those who argued for hypothetical universalism were willing to acknowledge that Christ's redemption resulted in anything other than blessings to its recipients. Nevertheless, Fraser maintained it was no less plausible that "one Cause may produce divers Effects" than that "one Effect proceed from diverse Causes," a fact that many of his contemporaries were willing to acknowledge.⁵⁹ The logic employed here parallels the distinction made previously when examining Fraser's teaching on the virtual will of God. Though the redemption of Christ, objectively and materially considered, was aimed at saving, Fraser asserted that God was justified in using Christ's redemption to whatever ends he intended. As a result, Fraser claimed that God had a secondary, though still absolute, purpose for Christ's redemption for the reprobate, which ended not in their salvation but in their receiving greater wrath.

Despite Fraser's ability to show the complementary nature of his two-fold doctrine of redemption with his adherence to the absolute nature of God's election and reprobation, the claim that Christ's redemption included a two-fold aim has been too much for critics to accept. Most Reformed theologians throughout the centuries, both Fraser's contemporaries and modern thinkers, understood that Christ's redemption in all respects marked an act of God's grace and mercy and was solely employed for gracious and merciful ends. Traditional particularists attempted to limit the efficacy of Christ's redemption exclusively to the elect, while those sympathetic to hypothetical universalism broadened the application of grace as an effect of Christ's redemptive effort, yet both presupposed only those who applied Christ's redemption by faith received its benefits. However, it has been argued that Fraser's belief in the absolute purposes of God for Christ's redemption and his rejection of conditionality demonstrates that he did remain faithful to the more essential teaching of the particularists. A close analysis of the order of God's decrees will further illustrate this point.

6.4: The Order of God's Decrees

Fraser's conception of the order of God's decrees will complete this discussion of the decrees. His doctrine of the order of God's decrees distinguished his theological system from the theologies of redemption proposed by Arminius and the hypothetical universalists, while also establishing greater continuity between himself and the other

⁵⁹ *JF*, 239.

particularists. Despite its importance, Fraser did not dedicate a specific section in any of his theological treatises to this issue, though he provided enough clues to decipher the essential aspects of his position on the order of God's decrees.

Fraser's lack of emphasis was unusual as was his failure to distinguish sharply between a supra- or an infralapsarian position. Samuel Rutherford and William Twisse, two of the theologians most often referred to by Fraser, devoted extensive time to explaining the finer points of the nature and order of God's decrees.⁶⁰ Both of these theologians argued for a supralapsarian reading of the order of God's decrees. The order of decrees depended on the nature of God and thus the nature of his decrees.⁶¹ According to a supralapsarian understanding of the decrees, God retains absolute power and sovereignty over all things by decreeing the election or reprobation of each of his creatures prior to his decreeing to create them or his decree to allow them to fall into the state of sin and death. The steps in the order of God's decrees are: God's first decreeing the election of some and the reprobation of others.⁶² Then, God decrees to create both the elect and the non-elect. God then

⁶⁰ Twisse, W., *The Riches of Gods Love Unto the Vessells of Mercy, Consistent With His Absolute Hatred or Reprobation of the Vessells of Wrath* (Oxford: L.L. and H.H., 1653). In this book, Twisse covers a variety of issues to vindicate supralapsarianism from what he believed to be unjustified claims, such as whether holding to a supralapsarian position necessarily implied that God was the author of sin or that sinners could not be held accountable for their sins. Fesko provides insights into the debates among the divines at the Westminster Assembly regarding the issue of infra- or supralapsarianism. See, Fesko, J. V., *Diversity Within the Reformed Tradition: Supra- and Infralapsarianism in Calvin, Dort, and Westminster* (Greenville, SC: Reformed Academic Press, 2001), 257-276. Richard's research is also helpful when considering what was involved in the development of Rutherford's supralapsarianism. See, Richard, G. M., "Deus qui regnant in excelsis: Samuel Rutherford's radical God-exalting theology and the grounds for his systematic opposition to Arminianism, with special reference to the *Examen Arminianismi* and the question of hyper-Calvinism" (Ph.D., University of Edinburgh, 2006), 125-129.

⁶¹ Armstrong argues that Rutherford and others holding to a supralapsarian view of God's decrees replaced Calvin's doctrine of predestination with their pseudo-Calvinist form by extracting the decrees of election and reprobation from their Christological and soteriological context. In contrast, Armstrong maintains that because Amyraut subordinated the decree of election to the decree to save universally through Christ's redemption Amyraut much more faithfully represented the heart of Calvin's theology. See, *CAH*, 161. See also, *CEC*, 15-19 and Peterson, R. A., *Calvin's Doctrine of the Atonement: What the Renowned Pastor and Teacher Said About the Cross of Christ* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1999), 13-14 and 18. Alternatively, Klooster recognizes the distinctions between Calvin and the post-Reformation particularists, like Rutherford, but argues that "Election in Christ in no way minimized or altered the decretive character of divine election of Calvin." See, Klooster, F. H., *Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination* (Grand Rapids: Baker Biblical Monograph, 1977), 41, 44, 138, 161, and 163.

⁶² It must be noted that the supralapsarian position does not seek to represent God as a capricious or tyrannical God who simply wills the destruction of many of his creatures on a whim. The decree of reprobation is an act of God's independent and sovereign choice, but this decree must be defined in two stages. On the one hand, God wills the preterition of the reprobate by his sovereign will, but, on

permits the fall of humankind in Adam. Subsequently, God decrees to provide Christ for the elect as the means of their redemption and salvation. Finally, he decrees to apply the redemption blood of Christ to the elect so that they might actually be saved.

Notwithstanding Fraser's dependence on Rutherford and Twisse for the development of his theology, Fraser seems to have rejected supralapsarianism.⁶³ It is imperative to note, however, that Fraser very much agreed with several of the fundamental principles which drove Twisse and Rutherford to propose a supralapsarian form of God's decrees.⁶⁴ Fraser unreservedly affirmed the logical consistency and absolute authority of God as expressed in the decrees. Furthermore, he insisted God decreed independent of any foreseen human response. However, Fraser differed from his supralapsarian predecessors by maintaining God predestined the election of some to salvation and others to reprobation in light of the logical, prior decree to allow all humanity to fall into a sinful condition.⁶⁵ This is not to suggest that God's decrees were influenced by something external to God, but rather to suggest that God decreed the end of the elect and reprobate with respect to their both being created and in a fallen condition.⁶⁶ Identifying more readily with proponents of infralapsarianism, Fraser's statements regarding the order of God's

the other hand, the reprobates' condemnation results from an act of God's justice exacted against sin. See, Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 119.

⁶³ *JF*, 77.

⁶⁴ Fesko contends that the Confession favors infralapsarianism, maintaining a concessionist view of the order of God's decrees at the Westminster Assembly. See, Fesko, *Diversity within the Reformed Tradition*, 268. Fraser stated his agreement with the fundamental conviction of both the supra- and infralapsarians regarding the nature of God's decree to reprobate when he proclaimed, "God out of his unsearchable Sovereignty determines what Creatures shall be damned by his absolute Decree." See, *JF*, 70.

⁶⁵ Both supra- and infralapsarians acknowledge the logical development of God's decrees while maintaining there remains an essential unity and singularity to God's purposes. Arminians and hypothetical universalists, on the other hand, teach that in addition to the logical development of God's eternal plans, there is also a temporal development in the decrees so that God's decrees are in some respect dependent on human responses.

⁶⁶ "*homo creatus et lapsus*." Berkhof notes that even supralapsarians, like Perkins and Twisse, maintained that humanity's sinful condition was taken into consideration in the decree to reprobate. See, Berkhof, 118. At the Westminster Assembly, Edmund Calamy argued against making the Confession of Faith a strictly supralapsarian document because it simply made sin a means to an end, a *medium executionis decretis*. See, Mitchell, *Minutes*, 151.

decrees are further evidence of the incompatibility of his views with those who advocated a conditional view of redemption and God's decrees.⁶⁷

It would be wrong to conclude that Fraser's perspective on the decrees rejected all conditional elements. Fraser's doctrine of God's decrees only incorporated conditional elements to the extent they were instrumental means by which the decrees were executed. Explaining the relationship between human depravity and the decree to reprobate, Fraser wrote,

For tho' I do not think that Man's foreknown sin was the Cause of the Decree of Reprobation, yet I think the Decree of Reprobation did ordain Men to Torment as they were Sinners, because as such they were only fit to shew God's Justice, the Manifestation of which, was God's outmost End and Intention, in Order to which Man's Damnation, Sin, Creation were but co-ordinated Means.⁶⁸

He argued that in light of God's decree to save the elect from out of the mass of fallen humanity, God's election necessitated he also decree the means by which he would carry out this redemption. God graciously communicated the stipulations of his purposes and the means by which these sovereign purposes would be carried out in the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace.⁶⁹ The incorporation of these instrumental means was consistent with the system proposed by most infralapsarians, and therefore, it is not the adoption of instrumental means which led to the disputes over the proper interpretation of Fraser's doctrine of redemption. That controversy

⁶⁷ *Infra*, meaning "after" or "under," implies that the decree of predestination logically follows God's decree to create and allow the fall. This position is also sometimes referred to as "sublapsarianism." See, Turretin, *Institutes*, 341. The term infralapsarianism has undergone some redefining in the course of theological history. Turretin's definition of infralapsarianism represents this shift in meaning. Berkhof explains that infralapsarianism initially implied that the fall of humanity was simply an object of foreknowledge, rather than the object of God's predestination—making infralapsarianism more likely to be associated with Arminianism historically. See, Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 118.

⁶⁸ *JF*, 77.

⁶⁹ The instrumentality of the covenants of redemption and grace with respect to the decree of election should not lead one to conclude that the decree of election was conditional, in the sense that God's decree to elect was somehow dependent on a subsequent decree or action of God. The decree of election was absolute, but included conditional elements as ordained by God in the absolute decree. Post-Reformation particularists had historical and theological precedent for employing covenantal language when delineating their views on God's absolute, predestined purposes for Christ's redemption. Lillback suggests that Calvin commonly contextualized his discussions concerning the doctrine of predestination within a covenantal framework. See, Lillback, P. A., "The Continuity Conundrum: Calvin and the Conditionality of the Covenant," *CTJ* 29, no. 42-74 (1994): 71-72.

developed when he broadened the parameters of Christ's redemption so that it might be considered both a means by which God would carry out the salvation of the elect and the damnation of the reprobate.⁷⁰

Fraser's contemporary critics branded him an 'Arminian' in response to his universal employment of Christ's redemption, irrespective of his attempts to clarify that the dual purpose Christ's redemption served to fulfill God's sovereignly ordained ends. In the 17th century, the suspicion of Arminianism was not taken lightly. Advocates of any form of universality were considered guilty of Arminianism until proven innocent, and perhaps not even then.⁷¹ Similarly, many modern scholars have fallen into the same reductionistic trap as their 17th century counterparts by categorizing all theologians, including Fraser, as hypothetical universalists who do not fit neatly into their paradigms of Arminianism and Reformed particularism.

Several key statements have been provided by Fraser, which help one determine where he placed Christ's redemption in the order of God's decrees. For instance, he wrote concerning his doctrine of reprobation, "The Blood of Christ and his Death for Reprobates was then a necessary Mean coordinate with other Means, necessarily subservient to the Execution of the Decree."⁷² It is noticeable that Fraser defined Christ's redemption as a means by which God's predestined end of reprobation would be brought to fulfillment. Consequently, God's decree of election and reprobation retained its primacy and absolute status. Christ's redemption, and much less the human response to it, bore no causal influence on God's predestining decree.

Fraser's judgment that God's predestining decrees took precedence over all means, including Christ's redemption, differentiated his doctrine of universal redemption from that taught by both Arminius and the hypothetical universalists,

⁷⁰ Fraser broadened the scope of Christ's redemption to include the reprobate, which did not necessarily introduce any greater subjectivity or conditionality in God's purposes. This is different than the redemptive theories of Arminianism and hypothetical universalism, both of which taught that God's decree to elect and reprobate was temporally suspended in order to account for the human response to Christ's redemption. Fraser, conversely, demanded that Christ's redemption affect God's decree to elect and reprobate.

⁷¹ The Marrowmen Controversy illustrated that even those who expressly denied teaching the doctrine of universal redemption were branded with the label 'Arminian.'

⁷² *JF*, 255.

like Amyraut and Baxter. Arminius proposed God's decree to elect and reprobate was subordinate to God's foreknowledge of how individuals would respond to God's prevenient, universal grace granted to all sinners through Christ's redemption.⁷³ According to Arminius, God peered down through the corridors of time and elected those individuals who by faith grasped hold of the grace offered by Christ in his death. Godfrey explains why most of the delegates at the Synod of Dort reacted so adversely to the Arminian doctrine of God's decrees, stating,

The Gelderland delegates charged that Arminius' confusion on the order of God's decrees was the source of Remonstrant error. The Remonstrant decrees stated: 1. Christ was appointed the basis of salvation; 2. Faith was made the condition of election; 3. The Word and Spirit are the means of generating faith; 4. Salvation was actually given to the faithful.⁷⁴

Godfrey clarifies that it was precisely such an ordering of the decrees that persuaded the contra-Remonstrants at the Synod of Dort to reject Arminius' doctrine of predestination in conjunction with a denunciation of his doctrine of universal redemption. Any charge of Arminianism leveled at Fraser must take into account the discrepancy between his understanding of the supremacy of God's predestining decree and Arminius' subordination of the decree.

There is a similar incongruity present between the ordering of God's decrees as described by Fraser and the hypothetical universalists.⁷⁵ Although theologians, like Amyraut and Baxter, intentionally avoided the Arminian teaching concerning God's foreknowledge as the foundation of the decree of predestination, both introduced an analogous hierarchy into their doctrine of God's decrees. Lachman explains,

⁷³ *TIC*, 110-111.

⁷⁴ *TIC*, 208.

⁷⁵ Godfrey's writes, "Martinius affirmed that saving faith is solely a gift of God and is given to the elect alone." Thus, in no sense could Martinus rightly be associated with the Remonstrants or a 'semi-Remonstrant' cause." *TIC*, 198. The logic Godfrey employs to disassociate Martinus from the Remonstrants and semi-Remonstrants parallels the argument of this thesis that Fraser, who was an absolutist and particularist, should be differentiated from both the teachings of Arminius and hypothetical universalists. See, Sections 2.6 and 3.3 of this thesis.

Amyraut held that there was a twofold decree by God regarding redemption: first, Christ was sent into the world to save all men, on the condition of belief; second, foreseeing that none would believe, He determined to give the faith necessary to salvation to some, the elect.⁷⁶

The discrepancy between Christ's intention to save all sinners and the Father's limiting salvation by only granting the means of salvation to the elect is the hallmark of hypothetical universalism. Amyraut divorced the work and intention of Christ from the purposes of the Father and the Spirit, and thus, introduced a form of competition within the Godhead.⁷⁷

Fraser sought to establish the preeminence of God's predestining decree within the context of his rebuttals to the conditional nature of God's decrees as espoused in Baxter's hypothetical universalism. Baxter argued that Christ's redemption merely moved sinners from being "*in potentia remotiore*, nor at all *quoad Potentiam Dei ordinatam*," or not pardonable, to the state wherein they might be pardoned, "pardonable *in Potentia propriae*, & *quoad Potentiam Deiordinatam*[sic]"⁷⁸ According to Baxter, it was on the basis of man's redeemed condition, not simply his status as created and fallen, that God proceeded to decree salvation to the elect. The universal and conditional pardon laid the foundation upon which the particular and actual pardon could be ordained for the elect. In addition to acknowledging explicitly his shared perspective on Christ's redemption with other hypothetical universalists, Baxter's concept of God's reprobation showed strong links with Arminianism. As evidence of this, he wrote, "He [God] predestineth or decreeth men to damnation, only on the *foresight* of final impenitence and infidelity, but not to Impenitence or Infidelity it self."⁷⁹

No such conclusion can be drawn from Fraser's doctrine of two-fold redemption. According to Fraser, the will of the Father and the will of the Son are one. That one sovereign and absolute will governs how Christ's redemption is applied. There is agreement between the Father and the Son to provide redemption,

⁷⁶ Marrow, 23.

⁷⁷ Godfrey explains, "Amyraut subordinates the Father's decree to apply the benefits of Christ's death to Christ's prior intention to come and accomplish salvation for all." *TIC*, 185.

⁷⁸ *URM*, 13.

⁷⁹ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie*, 68.

not for the salvation of all humanity without distinction, but to supply the means of salvation to the elect and supply the means by which the reprobate will receive God's wrath. It was, in part, the harmony between the will of the Father and the will of the Son in Christ's sacrifice that permitted Fraser to claim, "Not only is universal Redemption consistent with the Decree of Reprobation, but necessarily subservient thereunto."⁸⁰ Fraser rejected any idea there were conditional or contradictory aspects to the will of God, asserting Christ's redemption was ordained by God and intended by every person of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to be used for God's predestined ends to save the elect and to condemn the reprobate.

6.5: Fraser and the Particularists

Fraser's commitment to the priority and the absolute nature of God's purposes to save the elect and to condemn the reprobate raise the question as to why Fraser altered the paradigm of Christ's redemption. Nevertheless, he must be exonerated from previous charges of propagating the teachings of Arminianism or hypothetical universalism, based on his continual affirmation of his allegiance to the fundamental principals of particularism. He wrote, "I shall be truly grieved if any Thing uttered by me, be offensive to any; and as I am verily perswaded that I have not walked alone, or against the Current of Orthodox, Godly, Protestant Divines to my Knowledge in any Thing here set down."⁸¹

Fraser avowed with Calvin that "whatever happens in the universe is governed by God's incomprehensible plans" and with the Westminster Confession of Faith that "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass."⁸² More specifically, his doctrine of God's eternal decree echoed the double predestinarian theology outlined in Chapter III, Article 3 of the Confession, when it states, "By the decrees of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined unto

⁸⁰ *JF*, 255.

⁸¹ *JF*, 337. Fraser's doctrine of the divine decree, particularly his choice to confine his doctrine of universal redemption by defining it as a means by which the absolute decree of predestination is accomplished, also provides the information necessary to defend his claim to teach nothing out of accord with the Westminster Confession of Faith. Fraser singled out Rutherford and Durham as two theologians with whom he agreed on redemptive particularism. See, 252.

⁸² *Institutes*, I.17.2. *WCF*, III.i.

everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.”⁸³ Fraser, along with the other particularists, emphasized the sovereignty of God’s choices in determining the eternal state of his creatures, both for the elect and the reprobate.

Fraser and the other particularists were resolute in their conviction the predestining decrees of the Father and the redemptive work of the Son, in addition to the application of both of these by the Spirit, shared a common purpose leading to an effectual outcome. The Confession explained the unified efforts of each person of the Trinity as each works to secure the salvation of the elect,

The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he though the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him.⁸⁴

Christ’s redemption, beginning at the incarnation, climaxing in his death on the cross and validated through the resurrection was the fundamental means by which God accomplished his eternal, predestining decrees.

The examination of the theology of God’s will and decrees justify Fraser’s claims that he and those particularists who limit the parameters of Christ’s redemption of the elect “differ more in Appearance, than Reality.”⁸⁵ In an effort to ease the consciences of those particularists who might not be comfortable with his reference to the universality of Christ’s redemption, he declared,

I do ingenuously profess that I strike in and go alongst with these who maintain a particular Redemption of the Elect only, in which none but themselves have Interest. I am at one Work with them, yet I cannot say

⁸³ *WCF*, III.iii. A.F. Mitchell alludes to the fact, however, that there was quite an extensive debate regarding how the Confession ought to present the doctrine of predestination due, in part, to E. Calamy’s defense of a doctrine of predestination that was more welcoming to some elements of universalism. Nevertheless, Calamy argued for a doctrine of absolute election which necessitated some form of reprobation, so that even his modified doctrine of redemption might be called double predestination. Calamy and others have been associated with Amyraut’s theory on hypothetical universalism. This may lend some credence to Fraser’s claims of being a faithful adherent of the Confession while at the same time espousing a doctrine of universal redemption. See, Mitchell, *Minutes*, lv-lvi and 153.

⁸⁴ *WCF*, VIII.v.

⁸⁵ *JFSF*, 6.

but I use a different Mean or Middle to attain this End; I say something (I cannot deny) which they say not; but I am not convinc'd I say ought contrary or contradictory to them; I am engaged with them in the same Cause, but I choose in something a diverse Method from them to prosecute it against the common Enemy.⁸⁶

Acknowledging the agreement between the peculiar, two-fold doctrine of redemption Fraser proposed and more traditional formulation of particularism does not mean the differences are unimportant. However, his constant concern to validate the sovereignty and efficacy of God's predestining decrees should not be dismissed, as it so often has been, by Fraser's interpreters.

6.6: Conclusion

In order to define accurately Fraser's unique and sometimes confusing doctrine of two-fold redemption it is important to recognize the orthodoxy of his position on God's will and predestining decrees. According to Fraser, God's decree to elect some and reprobate others governed the whole work of Christ's redemption and the application of that work by the Spirit. Many previous interpretations of Fraser's doctrine of redemption have not adequately addressed the priority of God's absolute decree, and thus, have become consumed by secondary factors when attempting to categorize his perspective. As a corrective, the evidence presented in this chapter confirms the logical and theological compatibility of Fraser's redemptive paradigm with that of other particularists.

Fraser, however, does not fit neatly into either redemptive universalism or redemptive particularism. The confusion of how to categorize Fraser's universal particularism is due in large part to the rigidity and narrowness of these two options. This chapter has argued that Fraser is more closely aligned in logic and theological presuppositions with those traditionally referred to as redemptive particularists. This has been argued against those who portray Fraser as a hypothetical universalist based on his inclusion of the reprobate in Christ's redemptive efforts. Nevertheless, none of the stereotypical categories of redemption offers sufficient precision in order to account for Fraser's particularities.

⁸⁶ *JF*, 217.

It is not only Fraser, whose doctrine of redemption incorporates some aspects of both redemptive universalism and redemptive particularism, who would benefit from more sophisticated classifications. Chapter IV suggested the nuanced perspectives on redemption offered by men like Davenant, Ussher, and Preston, should receive more attention than has previously been given. These theologians, like Fraser, are often categorized as hypothetical universalists, yet in addition to their defense of the conditional covenant of grace established with the reprobate, each of them also affirmed the absolute nature of God's decree and Christ's redemption on behalf of the elect.⁸⁷ Standard explanations do not reconcile these two positions.

Based on this examination of Fraser's doctrine of redemption, it is recommended that modern interpreters broaden their current categories of redemption and incorporate new classifications. Scholars should recognize the limitations of deducing a theologian's orthodoxy based solely upon the categories of universal and limited redemption. There should be a move away from a single criterion method of evaluation, expanding discussions beyond redemptive particularism and redemptive universalism. The scope of Christ's redemption becomes only one of the criteria needed to categorize and judge the orthodoxy of a particular doctrine of redemption. Understanding the will of God in sending Christ, considering the conditional or absolute nature of God's decrees, and the priority of God's decree to save the elect and to condemn the reprobate serve as much better clues to the orthodoxy of a theologian and the category within which he should be included.

⁸⁷ Refer to Sections 6.1 and 6.2 of this thesis for a discussion on Davenant's, Ussher's and Preston's views on Christ's redemption.

CHAPTER VII: FRASER'S FEDERAL THEOLOGY

7.1: Introduction

For Fraser, federal theology functioned as the vehicle through which Christ's redemption was conveyed.¹ This was not unique to Fraser. J.B. Torrance remarks that federal theology had such an impact on the 17th century Reformed church that it became "the criterion of orthodoxy for the next two hundred years."² Despite the pervasive employment of the federal paradigm during the post-Reformation period, distinctions between different theologians were commonplace. Fraser differentiated his views from the majority of Reformed federalists by arguing that the covenant of grace incorporated both the elect and the reprobate.³ He broadened the parameters of

¹ The terms federal theology and covenant theology will be used interchangeably within this thesis. Some commentators, especially those critical of post-Reformation orthodoxy, wish to distinguish the covenantal thought of the early Reformers from this later period, wherein concepts of the covenant were employed as a means of validating a more restrictive definition of Christ's redemption based on God's eternal decrees. See, Hagen, K., "From Testament to Covenant in the Early Sixteenth Century," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 3 (1972): 17; Greaves, R. L., "The Origins and Early Development of English Covenant Thought," *The Historian* 31 (1968): 21-35; Greaves, R. L., "John Bunyan and Covenant Thought in the Seventeenth Century," *Church History* 36 (1967): 151-169; Greaves, R. L., "John Knox and the Covenant Tradition," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 24 (1973): 24-25; Weir, D. A., *The Origins of Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 3 and 158; Miller, *The Marrow of Puritan Divinity*, 48 and 51; Miller, *The New England Mind*, 375 and 383-385; Torrance, J.B. *Covenant or Contract?*, 51-76; von Rohr, *Covenant and Assurance*, 195-203 and von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace*, 10, 16, 32-33, and 196. T.F. Torrance refers to Fraser, in contrast with the Westminsterian particularists, as a "Cross-centered and Christ-centered" covenant theologian. See, *ST*, 182. Trinterud claimed that particularists constructed their arguments on natural law rather than biblical covenant theology. See, Trinterud, L. J., "The Origins of Puritanism," *Church History* 20 (1951): 39, 41, and 45.

² Torrance, "Covenant or Contract?", 2. The importance of Federal theology to post-Reformation orthodoxy was because it functioned as "an architectonic principle for the systematizing of Christian truth." See, *DSCH&T*, 214.

³ Fraser explained both the elect and the reprobate in the visible church were the proper recipients of the covenant, though he maintained the elect remained the priority in Christ's redemption. See, *JF*, 212-214. God's foremost purpose in the covenant was to communicate salvation to the elect. See, *ibid.*, 92. The wrath and condemnation purchased for the reprobate was secondary. See, 82-83 and *JFSF*, 278.

the covenant and Christ's representation because he was convinced a more universalistic interpretation of the covenant of grace provided greater confidence in the gospel's offer of salvation than the traditional Reformed federal paradigm.⁴ Fraser, however, continued to affirm the efficacy of the covenant to fulfill God's predestined purposes.⁵ Many of Fraser's critics have considered these mutually exclusive convictions, an opinion Fraser obviously did not share.

Specific elements of Fraser's federal paradigm will be examined to clarify how God's predestining decree and Christ's universal redemption converged in the covenant of grace.⁶ This breaks down into the following components: Fraser's definition of absoluteness; his argument for the universality of the covenant of grace, particularly with respect to the distinction between the external and internal covenant distinction; Fraser's description of the role of faith as a *sine qua non* granted to the elect to ensure that the full benefits of the covenant of grace and Christ's redemption were personally and effectively applied.

Though broader in its extent, Fraser's federal paradigm established a fundamental connection between Fraser and the particularists who also limited the covenant of grace to the elect. The solidarity between Fraser and the traditional particularists rested upon the supremacy of God's decree in governing God's covenantal dealings and the instrumental nature of faith in applying God's

⁴ The Federal theology developed in the 16th and 17th centuries continued to be the framework chosen by many 18th century theologians. In contrast to the arguments of modern scholars like Clifford, Kendall, and J.B. Torrance, men like Boston were convinced Federal theology supplied the strongest foundation upon which saving assurance could be built, because it clearly portrayed Christ as having fulfilled all the law demanded of the elect. See, Woodruff, S. A., "The Pastoral Ministry in the Church of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, with Special Reference to Thomas Boston, John Willison and John Erskine" (Ph.D., University of Edinburgh, 1965), 142.

⁵ Fraser maintained that, through Christ's redemption and the covenant he established with the visible church, all within the church were guaranteed a 'right' or 'interest' in salvation. He believed true assurance would never be discovered unless a person could anchor his faith in something substantial, i.e., something beyond a mere command or an intrinsic experience. See, *JF*, 131 and *JFSF*, 165. Right or interest, however, was not the only privilege Fraser spoke of in his discussions of the covenant of grace. He agreed with the particularists that the covenant of grace not only stipulated the possibility of salvation for all who would believe but also served as the vehicle through which the elect actually received means of applying salvation, namely the gift of faith.

⁶ It is not the goal of this chapter to provide nor does room permit an exhaustive analysis of Fraser's federal theology. More could be said with respect to the ecclesiastical and political dimensions of his covenant theology, aspects which played an important role in his life as a Covenanter. Nevertheless, the elements examined in this chapter have been chosen because they directly relate to the scope and efficacy of Christ's redemption.

covenantal promises.⁷ Furthermore, their agreement will be contrasted with the disagreement between Fraser's federal scheme and the views of the Arminians and the hypothetical universalists. The difference between Fraser's absolutist framework and the conditional covenant of grace advanced by the Arminians and hypothetical universalists was particularly apparent in Fraser's objections to Baxter's covenantal nomism, which created a new law out of the new covenant.⁸

7.2: An Absolute Covenant vs. a Conditional Covenant

7.2.1: Fraser's Argument for an Absolute Covenant

To understand Fraser's federal theology, one must recognize the importance he placed on the absoluteness of the covenant of grace. The absolute nature of the covenant of grace was essential because without it all confidence in the gospel was lost.⁹ The first aspect central to Fraser's definition of absoluteness was the concept that God's covenant was in every respect graciously granted. It was a "free Covenant."¹⁰ Fraser explained the benefits of the covenant of grace, stating, "Jesus Christ [was] freely given [to] thee and made thine by the free Donation of God."¹¹ Accordingly, God did not grant the covenant of grace on the basis of human merit nor was there anything external to God compelling him to institute such a covenant. The free covenant was given as a gift, confirmed by the fact that God's own Son was the principal benefit offered in the covenant.¹²

⁷ Helm clarifies what particularists meant by 'absolute' in relation to his discussion of "actual remission," which is not merely the 'aim' of Christ's redemption but also that which he procures by his efforts. To this notion of actual remission, Fraser simply added that Christ also aimed and procured the greater wrath which the reprobates deserved. Therefore, the absolute nature of Christ's redemption meant, according to Fraser, that Christ effectively remitted the sins of the elect and effectively secured the greater condemnation of the reprobate. See, Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists*, 13.

⁸ Although there were substantial differences between the Arminians and the hypothetical universalists regarding the nature of God's covenant, both groups understood the covenant of grace as a conditional contract, without guarantee of salvation for any. See, WA, I.408, 416 and 424; *AJ*, 60; *TJR*, preface and *URM*, 40. Baxter claimed that the covenant of grace was not properly defined as an absolute covenant because it contained "mere gracious predictions." See, *AJ*, 9 and 91. Fraser and the majority of his Reformed contemporaries, on the other hand, affirmed the covenant established the salvation of the elect with absolute certainty based on God's predestining decrees.

⁹ Fraser used the 'covenant of grace' and the 'gospel' interchangeably because the covenant of grace served as the means through which the gospel promises were conveyed. See, *JFSF*, 60 and 113.

¹⁰ *JF*, 89.

¹¹ *JF*, 122. The bracketed words here and below have been added for clarification.

¹² Refer to Sections 7.6 and 7.7, for further discussion of Christ as both the object and ground of faith.

Fraser's argument for recognizing God's covenant as a free and gracious covenant was common to Arminians, hypothetical universalists, and particularists.¹³ Fraser considered it still needed to be stated, especially in light of Baxter's assertion the covenant of grace was conditionally granted, a position Fraser believed undercut the gospel.¹⁴ The graciousness of God was important, if the covenant was granted without reference to human merit, it was not possible to stipulate the performance of duties as the means by which a sinner received the covenant or its benefits.¹⁵ According to Fraser, the only proper way to speak of the covenant of grace was in absolute terms.

Fraser also used the term 'absolute' to denote the intrinsic value of Christ's redemption, the act inaugurating the new covenant. He argued the infinitude of Christ's person as the second person of the Trinity could not be isolated from his work as Redeemer.¹⁶ The intrinsic value of Christ's redemption established a 'naked sufficiency,' which viewed in isolation from God's ordained ends for Christ's redemption, implied an absolute and limitless sufficiency.¹⁷ No one, not even God, could deny the absolute sufficiency of Christ's redemption in this respect, lest he deny Himself.¹⁸ Thus, Fraser claimed that "the Blood of Christ was of sufficient

¹³ Arminians, hypothetical universalists and Reformed theologians, alike, defended the idea that God's grace sustains the process of salvation. However, each of these held very different opinions on the effectiveness of God's grace to result in an individual's salvation.

¹⁴ In the preface to *A Treatise on Justifying and Saving Faith*, Fraser identified John Goodwin and Richard Baxter as two theologians who represented an anti-gospel legalism. Despite these men's claim to defend the freeness of the covenant of grace, Fraser labelled them enemies of the gospel based on their insistence that the covenant of grace was essentially conditional. See, *JFSF*, iii.

¹⁵ Though Baxter asserted it was grace enabling the elect to perform the required conditions of the new covenant, he defined those conditions as 'moral conditions.' Fraser objected to the concept of faith and sincere obedience as moral conditions because it implied an individual would be saved by his faith rather than Christ's righteousness. Fraser argued the only appropriate definition of the covenantal conditions was as instrumental means, not true moral conditions. He explained, "The Covenant of Grace is truly said to be free, not so much because God bestows Grace and Glory immediately or without Means, or if it require any Thing on our Part, it is so small that it deserves not the Name of Condition." *JF*, 117-118.

¹⁶ Fraser frequently mentioned the intrinsic value of Christ's redemption. See, *JF*, 12, 164, 211, and 323.

¹⁷ Because of his strong attachment to the scholastic method, Fraser felt compelled to acknowledge that the naked sufficiency of Christ's redemption logically implied even the Devil could be saved. However, without the ordinate sufficiency, relating to the sovereign purposes of God, the notion that Christ's redemption gave hope to the Devil was merely an academic proposition. See, *JF*, 12. These types of qualifications illustrate the complexity and subtlety of many of Fraser's arguments.

¹⁸ Refer to Sections 5.2.1, 5.2.5, and 6.2.1 for discussion regarding the differences between the intrinsic or objective sufficiency and the ordinate or efficacious sufficiency of Christ's redemption.

Value to be a Satisfaction for his Sins, and Christ could, if he would, save him [any sinner, even the devil].”¹⁹

Fraser qualified his statements by asserting Christ’s naked sufficiency did not provide sufficient grounds for believing because it did not supply the individual with the ‘warrant’ or ‘right’ to apply Christ’s redemption. Such a warrant depended upon the will of God, not the intrinsic worth of Christ’s person. The penitent sinner needed a promise, not just a ‘naked Christ.’

Fraser declared God graciously promised salvation in the covenant of grace to all who would believe.²⁰ This promise introduced the ‘warrant’ necessary for an individual to act by trusting the all-sufficient Christ was his by faith. Such a promise was the result of God’s eternal and unchangeable decree.²¹ God’s decreed purpose for Christ’s redemption, therefore, became the focal point of Fraser’s federal theology.

According to Fraser, God ordained that those within the visible church had the legal right to claim the benefits of the covenant.²² The right to plead the covenantal promises of God was not a privilege Fraser took lightly. He understood this right was established through Christ’s sacrifice. Fraser related this legal and universal right represented in this covenantal promise to the absoluteness of the covenant of grace, stating, “The Promises of the Gospel [that were] absolutely conveyed, published and holden forth [in the covenant of grace] to every one in the visible Church to lay hold upon are truly absolute.”²³ Such a right carried with it an interest in Christ’s redemption which was undeniable.

¹⁹ *JF*, 12.

²⁰ Fraser wrote, “Faith doth not give Right to the Covenant of Grace; but possesseth a Man of his Right.” *SCSM*, 40.

²¹ Fraser explained there were two elements which God used to draw sinners into the covenant. On the one hand, God’s used the ‘extrinsic’ grounds of God’s command to believe, which made faith a duty, and on the other hand, God supplied ‘intrinsic’ grounds to warrant faith through the promises of the gospel and Christ’s redemption. See, *JF*, 2-3.

²² Fraser believed Christ paid the price of ransom for all sinners through his work of redemption, however, the necessity of “pleading” one’s rights to “Liberation and Absolution remained.” See, *JF*, 164.

²³ *JF*, 103. The legal and absolute right granted through the covenant provided the warrant to believe. It did not convey the privileges of the covenant promises. Fraser explained, “Except we receive them [covenant promises] by Faith, these good Things in them contained shall never be made out to us.”

Fraser defended the ‘truly absolute’ nature of God’s covenantal promise, not only because it was bestowed upon all sinners, but because it was offered without condition. Drawing on Paul’s teaching in Galatians 3:18, Fraser taught the promise of salvation was given absolutely or without condition since it formed the seed of faith.²⁴ The promise was not the product or reward for faith, nor did the individual sinner have to merit his interest in the promise, it was given to him as a gift to which faith was the only acceptable response.

Abraham was identified as an example of an individual who was given a promise and responded in faith. Fraser reasoned Abraham could not have believed if God had withheld the promise, for then the object of his faith would have remained indeterminate and have contradicted the nature of justifying faith, which demands an object.²⁵ For Abraham to possess true faith, God’s promise must precede any condition, including faith. The same was true for all believers, especially for those after the revelation of Christ. A sinner was presented with “Christ himself, Sanctification, Grace or Glory, Life and Salvation,” manifested as absolute promises so that those who received them might respond in faith coupled with assurance.²⁶

Thus far, three aspects of Fraser’s definition of the covenant of grace have been highlighted: the freeness and universality of the covenant, the intrinsic worth of Christ’s redemption, and the conditionless promise conveyed in the covenant. By themselves they do not distance Fraser from Baxter’s neonomianism. Both men affirmed the priority of God’s grace and insisted faith was necessary to receive the benefits of Christ’s redemption. However, Fraser did not stop there.

The final and critical element within Fraser’s position on the absoluteness of the covenant of grace, relates to the governance of Christ’s redemption by God’s decree.²⁷ As has been shown, Fraser remained committed to the orthodox Reformed view of the order of God’s decrees.²⁸ He understood Christ’s redemption as a means

²⁴ *JF*, 92.

²⁵ Fraser maintained faith must particularize the gospel promises, and therefore, the concept of an indeterminate or general believing fell short of justifying faith. See, Section 7.9 of this thesis.

²⁶ *JF*, 89.

²⁷ Muller, *Calvin and Calvinists*, I.352-353.

²⁸ The orthodox Reformed position on God’s decrees was not uniform. All were agreed, however, that the nature of God’s decree did not include any form of contingency in the mind of God. See, *PRRD*, II. 129 and 161. This could not be said for either the Arminians or hypothetical universalists. Regarding the order of God’s eternal decrees, there were disagreements between supporters of

ordained by God to accomplish God's predestined ends and opposed the theory of hypothetical universalism, upon which Baxter's neonomianism was based. The hypothetical universalists represented Christ's redemption as a means for God to gain the right to elect, rather than a means of applying salvation to the elect. Fraser argued the covenant communicated more than just the provision for or the possibility of salvation for the elect. As an absolute covenant, it ensured the effective application of Christ's redemption to the elect because it procured a promise, a right to the promise, and the benefits promised in the covenant.²⁹

7.2.2: Fraser's Two-Fold Covenant

The uniqueness of Fraser's covenantal paradigm was seen, not in his treatment of the elect, but in his efforts to include the reprobate as covenant recipients. Fraser's two-fold covenantal schema has drawn great criticism from both his contemporaries and modern scholars and has been the principal source of the confusion surrounding the proper interpretation of his doctrine of redemption. Fraser's contemporaries took one look at his inclusion of the reprobate in the covenant of grace, ignored his appeals to the sovereignty of God, and deemed him an Arminian.

Most modern interpreters refer to Fraser, not as an Arminian, but a hypothetical universalist because they overlook Fraser's doctrine of God's decrees and do not accept his claims to be a covenantal absolutist.³⁰ Although Fraser appropriated much of the language hypothetical universalists employed, especially when speaking of the extent of Christ's redemption, there was a crucial difference between the way they organized the various elements within their theories.

infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism, yet both maintained that God's decrees never included a temporal progression or a sequential development, which could be said of both Arminianism and hypothetical universalism. Hypothetical universalists, like Baxter, even went so far as to pit the decreed end of the Son's redemption against the decreed end of the Holy Spirit's application of redemption. Christ intended to save the world, whereas the Holy Spirit purposed to save only the elect. Proctor refers to the temporal development as the "two moments in God's will." See, Proctor, *The Theology of Moise Amyraut*, 208.

²⁹ Regarding the instrumentality of faith and the salvation of the elect, Fraser agreed with Gib, his chief antagonist during the controversies of the 18th century. Gib stated, "There is a condition in the things, but none in the will of God; that is absolute, that such things should be procured, and bestowed." *DD*, 90.

³⁰ See, Section 6.2.1 of this thesis.

In Chapter VI, the apparently minor variations between Fraser's and the hypothetical universalists' understanding of God's decrees radically affected the outcome of their theories of redemption. Similarly these differences produced two very different perspectives on the covenant of grace. Fraser prioritized God's predestining decree, whilst the hypothetical universalists maintained that decree was subsumed under God's primary goal in sending Christ to save the world, resulting in a conditional view of the covenant.³¹ According to Fraser, the covenant of grace served as an instrumental means by which God carried out his sovereign purposes for both elect and reprobate. God's covenantal purposes were absolute and could not be diverted or aided by man or a subsequent decree of God.

The difference between Fraser's absolute covenant and the hypothetical universalists' conditional covenant was most evident in Fraser's response to Baxter's neonomianism. Baxter taught that God's will to save comprised two parts.³² First, God willed to save all humanity through Christ's redemption. This radically altered the purpose of the covenant of grace. According to Baxter, neither Christ's redemption nor the covenant God created through Christ's redemption promised salvation to any. It was only within the context of God's secondary, electing will that faith was ordained for the elect, which would lead to their justification.

Rainbow argues the best way to understand the impact of hypothetical universalists' two-fold saving will is to speak of God's covenantal dealings as two separate covenants, the *foedus hypotheticum* and the *foedus absolutum*.³³ Although he directed his comments at Amyraut, his conclusions are equally applicable to Baxter. He explains,

The pivotal point in all this is that Amyraut linked the death of Christ to the general saving will of God and not to the electing will of God.

The death of Christ was thus the effectuation of the *foedus*

³¹ To label hypothetical universalists as conditionalists does not mean they were Arminians. Hypothetical universalists recognized salvation was based solely on the sovereign choice of God. However, by subordinating or logically postponing the decree to elect after the decree to save universally, hypothetical universalists jeopardize the efficacy of Christ's redemption and reliability of the covenantal promises. See, Proctor, *The Theology of Moise Amyraut*, 248.

³² Van Stem explains, "In clear distinction from the Arminians who taught that God's decree of election was based on the faith he foresaw, Amyraut made the gift of faith part of God's eternal counsel. The first decree predestined all men to be saved; the second predestined some to receive the gift of faith." See, Van Stem, *The Controversy*, 43.

³³ Rainbow, *The Will of God*, 70.

hypotheticum; it got its intention, its *telos*, from God's will to save every human being. Then, that only the elect are actually saved was the result of the outworking of the *foedus absolutum*, effectuated by the Spirit.³⁴

For Rainbow the distinguishing characteristic of hypothetical universalists' covenantal theology was the fact that the covenant of grace merely refers to God's conditional will to save. Thus, neither the elect nor the reprobate were saved as a direct result of Christ's redemption.³⁵ The new covenant became a provision for salvation, but not God's means to bring about salvation.³⁶ In this respect, hypothetical universalists' federal theology paralleled Arminius' arguments for prevenient grace.³⁷ The covenant enabled God to save, but communicated nothing as to whether or not God would actually save.

7.2.3: Davenant's Two-Fold Covenant

Unlike Baxter, Davenant was not specifically mentioned in Fraser's *A Treatise on Justifying Faith*, yet the fact that he is regularly classified as a hypothetical universalist and claims to be an absolutist, at least in some respects, provides some interesting parallels between his understanding of the covenant of grace and Fraser's. Davenant's two-fold covenantal view functions as a middle-way, which supplies further insight into the differences between Baxter's conditionalism and Fraser's absolutism. Davenant, as did Baxter, affirmed a *foedus hypotheticum* and a *foedus absolutum*, and his argument for the universal application of the covenant of grace sounded very similar.³⁸ He stated, "He [God] declared that he was given absolutely to all from the love of God to man, he shews nevertheless that it would not profit all to eternal life absolutely and simply, but conditionally, even all if they

³⁴ Rainbow, *The Will of God*, 70-71.

³⁵ Hypothetical universalists disagreed with Fraser and the Reformed orthodoxy by denying that there was an immediate causal link between the covenant of grace and the salvation of the elect.

³⁶ McGrath, *Puritans*, 52 and 174.

³⁷ The difference between hypothetical universalists' conditional covenant of grace and Arminius' view of prevenient grace relates to how they are applied to the individual for salvation. Hypothetical universalists advanced the orthodox position that God sovereignly determined who would be saved. Nevertheless, both Arminians and hypothetical universalists argue for a conditional or prevenient covenant, rather than an absolute one.

³⁸ *DDC*, 390 and 396.

should believe, or all who should believe.”³⁹ It is in response to his universal language and the presence of both a *foedus hypotheticum* and a *foedus absolutum* that Davenant has been so frequently identified by modern scholars as a hypothetical universalist. However, before accepting this label, the uniqueness of his covenantal perspective should be recognized.

Davenant, unlike the hypothetical universalists, emphasized the *foedus absolutum*.⁴⁰ As a consequence of reprioritizing God’s absolute ends in the covenant of grace, Davenant did not speak of the covenant as offering a prevenient grace or the possibility of salvation to all. He boldly declared, “The infallible salvation of the elect is, in subserviency to the glory of God, a certain special and most excellent end, for the obtaining of which the death of Christ was destined.”⁴¹ Whereas Baxter underscored the conditional nature of Christ’s redemption and the conditional nature of the covenant of grace, Davenant spoke of Christ’s redemption as being “destined” infallibly to save the elect.⁴²

Davenant acknowledged the absolute end in the covenant of grace because he considered “the secret and eternal act of God in predestining” to be the foundational and governing feature of Christ’s redemptive efforts.⁴³ He stated;

Conditionall decrees of Salvation and Damnation have been published in the Gospel, and are acknowledged by all Divines: but conditionall Decrees of eternall Predestination and Preterition are not found in Scripture, nore allowed of by the Church of England.⁴⁴

³⁹ DDC, 385.

⁴⁰ Anthony Milton comments on Davenant’s two-fold covenant of grace and the priority he placed on the secret will of God, “Christ is rightly said to have died for all men, inasmuch as on His death is founded a covenant of salvation, applicable to all men while they are in this world. Nor can he be said to have died for each individually inasmuch as His death may profit each for salvation, to the tenor of the new Covenant, none being excluded. On the other hand, it cannot profit any individual, contrary to the tenor of that Covenant, although he should be of the elect.” See, Milton, A., *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort* Church of England Record Society (13) (Suffolk, UK: The Boydell Press, 2005), 398

⁴¹ DDC, 396.

⁴² See, Sections 3.1, 3.3, and 3.4 of this thesis for greater detail regarding the distinctions between Davenant’s and hypothetical universalists’ doctrine of redemption.

⁴³ DDC, 398.

⁴⁴ Davenant, *Animadversions*, 38. Note the relationship between the decretive will of God and prescriptive will. See, Sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3 of this thesis for a discussion of how these categories influenced Fraser’s perspective.

With respect to the doctrine of predestination and the salvation of the elect, he unequivocally aligned himself with absolutists.

The distance between Davenant's formulation of the covenant of grace and many other absolutists related to his rejection of the doctrine of double predestination.⁴⁵ Concerning the doctrine of absolute damnation or reprobation, Davenant maintained, "such a decree was never enacted in Gods eternall counsel, nor ever published in his revealed word."⁴⁶ He did not consider his affirmation of "the eternall, free and absolute decree of Predestination or Election" to be inconsistent with his disapproval of "an absolute decree for any mans Damnation."⁴⁷ The elect were the principal recipients of Christ's redemption and the covenant of grace, though, according to Davenant, the reprobate's interest in Christ's redemption and the covenant of grace was undeniable. He adapted the accepted absolutist interpretation of the covenant of grace, asserting the reprobate had sufficient grace in the *foedus hypotheticum*, which permitted belief, but lacked the special grace of God found in the *foedus absolutum*, which God employed to "infallibly bring them [the elect] to glory."⁴⁸

Notwithstanding his inclusion of a *foedus hypotheticum*, the preference Davenant gave to the *foedus absolutum* indicates his covenant theology should be distinguished from the hypothetical universalism of Amyraut and Baxter. If that is true for Davenant, the call to differentiate Fraser's federalism from hypothetical universalism merits even greater consideration, seeing Fraser did not acknowledge a *foedus hypotheticum*. For Fraser, all God's purposes in the covenant were absolute, even though he distinguished God's ends for the elect from those for the reprobate.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Briggs claimed the Confession was an example of theological consensus, in which double predestinarians, single predestinarians and hypothetical universalists could all find room for their views. See, Briggs, C. A., *Whither?: A Theological Question for the Times* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1889), 103. Fesko noted the Confession represented a compromise on certain aspects of theologies but denied that the Assembly failed to codify a specific understanding of the *ordo decretorum*. Irrespective of the fact there might have been some delegates who supposed the idea of conditional decrees, Fesko concluded the Assembly adopted the view that placed God's predestining decrees prior to the decree to send Christ as the Mediator. See, Fesko, *Diversity within the Reformed Tradition*, 173.

⁴⁶ Davenant, *Animadversions*, 4.

⁴⁷ Davenant, *Animadversions*, 2.

⁴⁸ Davenant, *Animadversions*, 24.

⁴⁹ Fraser argued that, "There is properly no conditional Redemption neither of Elect or Reprobate, but only absolute." *JF*, 173.

7.2.4: Fraser's Universal Particularism

Fraser's insistence on employing universalistic terminology and his conviction that the reprobate had a right to the covenant promises created a tension between his views and those of the traditional particularists. Though Fraser went a long way towards re-establishing links with Reformed orthodoxy by opposing any hint of conditionality in God's decrees or the covenant of grace, these links have been ignored by many of Fraser's previous interpreters. It is important that the continuity between Fraser's covenantal perspective and that of the traditional particularists be affirmed in opposition to those theologians like Torrance who emphasize the discontinuity.⁵⁰ The covenantal views of Owen, Rutherford and Durham provide evidence of this close association.

Owen, like Fraser, argued against the idea of a conditional covenant of grace. He stated that the covenant between God the Father and God the Son included a "promise of success."⁵¹ According to Owen, God's covenant ensured Christ's redemption would accomplish its designed end and the elect would be saved.

Owen was confident in the success of God's covenant because "our [believers'] deliverance is not dependent on a secondary condition, but is procured absolutely."⁵² He understood that, "There is a condition in the things, but none in the will of God," and therefore, the covenant of grace was absolute. The conditions stipulated by the covenant were both 'procured' and 'bestowed' through the covenant itself.⁵³

When Rutherford explained the absolute nature of the covenant of grace, he stated its only true 'condition' was the redemptive work of Christ. His righteousness was necessary for God legitimately to declare sinners righteous. The redemptive

⁵⁰ Muller affirms the complementary nature of "the Reformed doctrine of covenant", and "the Reformed doctrine of predestination," concluding as Owen, Rutherford, Durham and Fraser did, that both of these doctrines declare "a grace unilaterally bestowed by God" and assume "human responsibility and obedience under and enabled by grace." Muller, *After Calvin*, 12. Despite the shared agreement between Owen, Rutherford, Durham and Fraser regarding the absolute nature of the covenant of grace based on the priority of God's sovereign decree, Torrance chose to stress the discontinuity. See, *ST*, 185.

⁵¹ *DD*, 18.

⁵² *ODC*, 33-34. *Of the Death of Christ* was specifically written in response to Baxter's hypothetical universalism.

⁵³ *DD*, 90.

work of Christ having been fulfilled, God promised the elect “the Thing that falls under the Condition.” Therefore, that which ‘falls under the Condition’ could not be regarded as a condition, but flowed independent of man’s efforts and flowed from God’s “absolute Will” as a “free Gift.”⁵⁴

Durham related the efficacy of God’s covenant to the “special grace” given to the elect. It guaranteed the covenant of grace not only conferred the warrant to believe the gospel as it did for all men, it also granted them “pardon of sin, faith, [and] repentance” allowing them to partake of the promised mercy.⁵⁵ Fraser echoed Rutherford and Durham when he wrote of God initiating an “absolute Engagement” with the elect in the covenant of grace.⁵⁶ The covenant of grace represented a commitment to apply what was promised by granting the elect the means of personal acceptance.

Durham was a vocal supporter of particularism and was unequivocal in his stance that “grace hath a peculiar channel of its own wherein it runs towards a certain select number, and not towards all.”⁵⁷ Nevertheless, when it came to the covenant of grace, Durham broadens the parameters of the covenant to include the reprobate at least in some respect. A willingness to extend the boundaries of the covenant provides a certain degree of precedent for the broadening within Fraser’s universalism. Durham explained,

Now, when we say that Christ's sufferings and death, are a price for the sins of his people, we exclude not the reprobate simply from temporal and common favours and mercies that come by his death; they may have, and actually have, common gifts and works of the Spirit, the means of grace, which are some way effects and fruits of the same covenant, but we say that the reprobate partake not in saving mercy, and that Christ's death is a satisfaction only for the elect, and

⁵⁴ *CD*, 479.

⁵⁵ Durham spoke of God extending a special grace to the elect in the covenant of grace because he recognized there was a general or common grace which flowed to the reprobate as byproduct of the covenant of grace. See, Durham, *The Errors*, 4. Durham’s references to the general scope of the covenant of grace relate to Fraser’s explicit distinction between the external and internal design of the covenant of grace.

⁵⁶ *JF*, 89.

⁵⁷ Durham, *The Errors*, 3.

that none others get pardon of sin, faith, repentance, &c. but it, but they only.⁵⁸

No one challenges Durham's commitment to the orthodox position on the covenant of grace, yet he clearly left room for "temporal and common favours and mercies that come by his death."

Fraser, like Durham, never stated that it was God's intention or the unintentional benefit of Christ's redemption to save any other than the elect. According to Fraser, the reprobate shared in the gift to the elect, who were the covenant's primary recipients, only to the extent they benefited from a common or general interest in Christ's redemption. Fraser's distinction between what Durham might have referred to as the special redemption for the elect and the common redemption for the reprobate can be summarized by Fraser's efforts to differentiate God's internal covenant from a more general external covenant.⁵⁹

7.3: The External and the Internal Covenant of Grace

When considering Fraser's covenant theology, it is important to take into account his emphasis on the visible church. Led by his pastoral concerns, Fraser did not limit the scope of the covenant of grace to the invisible church, the elect, a qualification common among particularists.⁶⁰ The terms external covenant and internal covenant have been chosen to distinguish between how the covenant of grace benefited the visible church and the invisible church. God established one covenant of grace, but Fraser understood the covenant was applied generally to all and personally and internally to the elect only.⁶¹ Fraser understood the elect and the reprobate did not share all the same benefits in the covenant of grace but explained the covenant promises were communicated to the elect in the context of their participation in the

⁵⁸ Durham, *The Errors*, 4.

⁵⁹ This distinction between God's internal and external covenant of grace parallels the differences between effectual call of God and the external proclamation of the gospel. See, *JF*, 151-153.

⁶⁰ His emphasis on the visible church illustrated the pastoral nature of his theology, in contrast to the idea that Fraser was writing in an effort to develop a new systematic perspective.

⁶¹ See, Section 7.9 of this thesis regarding Fraser's argument for the personalization of God's promises. Fraser's statements regarding the change that occurs from the general promises becoming personal promises parallels this transition from looking at the covenant of grace as an external covenant to an internal covenant.

visible church.⁶² Fraser concluded Christ's headship over the elect necessarily implied that he also secured secondary benefits for the reprobates who also belonged to the visible church, and in this respect Fraser argued Christ was the Redeemer of the visible church.⁶³

An appeal to Christ's headship was not uncommon among 17th century theologians. For Westminsterian particularists, Christ's headship ensured the promises of the covenant of grace would be fulfilled for the elect. Fraser deviated from this more familiar application of Christ's headship when referring to the visible church as a beneficiary of this office. Although he maintained the efficacy of Christ's redemption leading to the salvation of the elect, he frequently placed the emphasis on Christ's representative actions for the entire visible church, thereby introducing the concept of universal redemption through universalizing the covenant of grace.⁶⁴

Fraser justified the broadening of the traditional Reformed paradigm of Christ's representation by drawing stronger parallels between the nature of Christ's headship and that of the first Adam. This meant Fraser generally espoused a two covenant view of history.⁶⁵ At the time of creation, before sin had entered into the

⁶² Fraser's argument that the visible church was the recipient of the covenant of grace introduced a possible limitation to his universalism. Both Arminianism and hypothetical universalism rejected all boundaries between the visible church and the world at large. They maintained God, at least initially, intended to save all humanity through Christ's universal redemption, and thus the covenant of grace was not seen to have been established with the church, visible or invisible, but with the world. See, *WA*, I.416 for Arminius' argument for a universal prevenient grace, which Christ supplied in order to enable sinners to choose salvation if they so desired. See also, *GCP*, 162-163 and Fesko, *Diversity within the Reformed Tradition*, 173. Although attempting to align himself with Calvin, Amyraut drew the conclusion, based upon his universal and conditional theory of Christ's redemption that saving faith could be born in the heart of an individual who had never heard the gospel. This suggests a greater harmony between the hypothetical universalists' theory of redemption and Arminianism, not Calvinism. See, *BTP*, 81-84.

⁶³ Fraser stressed Christ was the head of the visible church. Gib, on the other hand, declared, "That in the Covenant of Grace, our Lord Jesus Christ became the *federal Head* and *Representative* of those *only* among Mankind-sinners, whom God hath out of his mere good Pleasure from all Eternity *elected* unto everlasting Life." *Act*, 6. However, Rutherford described Christ as head of the visible church to the end that he might shepherd the elect. See, *CD*, 431. Consequently, Fraser's stance that Christ was the head of the visible church was not mutually exclusive with the priority that he placed on the elect in the covenant of grace.

⁶⁴ In accordance with his affirmation of God's absolute decree, however, Fraser distinguished the "outward Protection" Christ's mediation provided for the reprobate and the justification, sanctification and purification which applied to the elect. See, *JF*, 244 and 245.

⁶⁵ Fraser preferred to speak of two covenants. See, *ibid.*, 170. However, Lachman argues, "Shaping his doctrine in the context of Christ's dying for all men one death and performing one work, he tends to speak of this one Covenant as the Covenant of Redemption when he is referring to what God has done in Christ for men and as the Covenant of Grace in speaking of its apprehension by men. Thus he speaks of the decree of reprobation as proceeding from the Covenant of Redemption, and of God as

world, God established with Adam a covenant, commonly referred to as the covenant of works. Though called the covenant of works to distinguish it from the later covenant, it was also founded upon the grace of God. Fraser understood God owed nothing to his creation, yet he graciously promised Adam eternal life provided Adam remained faithful to God's commands, specifically the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adhering to the Confession of Faith's interpretation of this covenantal arrangement, Fraser affirmed Adam represented himself and all humanity in the covenant.⁶⁶ Given that the human race was born from him, Adam was the head of all creation.

In addition to the promise of eternal life, God stipulated Adam's disobedience would result in eternal death.⁶⁷ Adam's subsequent fall and God's response of casting Adam and Eve out of the garden symbolized more than a temporary disruption in man's relationship with God. Man was cut off from the promise of eternal life. From that point that the covenant was broken, all humankind stood condemned by God's law and could not reconcile themselves to God.⁶⁸ Adam and his posterity were without hope prior to God's revelation of the gospel.⁶⁹ The gospel, the message of the new covenant, once more promised eternal life, through not based on Adam's obedience but on Christ's sacrifice for sin and complete righteousness as the Son of God.⁷⁰

According to Fraser's doctrine of the covenant of grace, one of the fundamental changes was an exchange of headship; those who were in Adam were now in Christ. Concerning the extent of their representation, Fraser thought as the headship of the first Adam included both the elect and the reprobate of the world, so too did the headship of Christ, the second Adam. Many of Fraser's Reformed contemporaries denied Christ's headship was as extensive as Adam's, maintaining instead that the covenant of grace was made solely with the elect, leaving the

being the author of the Covenant of Redemption, but in speaking of the Gospel and man's response (faith, not a moral condition) he refers to the Covenant of Grace. So while he speaks of two covenants only, in practice he differs little if any from those who speak of three." *Marrow*, 96.

⁶⁶ *WCF*, VII, ii.

⁶⁷ Genesis 2:17.

⁶⁸ *JF*, 34.

⁶⁹ *JF*, 144.

⁷⁰ Genesis 3:15.

reprobate remained in bondage to sin under the conditions of the first covenant. As such the reprobate had no rights to the new covenant's promises of salvation because this covenant was not purchased for them. Fraser criticized those who limited the covenant of grace to the elect because of the pastoral implications.

Fraser argued that since it was orthodox to recognize there were both elect and reprobate people within the covenanted community, it could be deduced each person within that community had an interest in the covenant of grace. In his view, the alternative position necessarily introduced doubt about who was truly elect. Fraser developed his doctrine of the covenant of grace, to preserve the integrity of the covenant to save the elect, whilst also providing the confidence for everyone to claim the redemption of Christ for themselves. This produced the distinction the external and internal aspects of the covenant of grace.

The external covenant conveyed the trustworthiness God's promise to save and established God's commitment to judge those who rejected his promise. Thus, despite Fraser's contention the covenant of works was abrogated through Christ's redemption, he explained the threat of judgment was still very much a reality in his federal paradigm. His emphasis on the eternal covenant of grace cannot be used to argue for universal salvation. He affirmed the reprobate was granted certain privileges by belonging to the visible, covenanted community, yet he was under greater obligation for them.

The external element of the covenant of grace not only established the grounds upon which the reprobate would be judged, but it also provided a legal right to or interest in the promise of salvation. Heavily influenced by his scholastic context, Fraser considered it necessary to create a legal right because he maintained that no natural right to salvation could be assumed. It was only "*ex compacto*" with Christ serving as an individual's "legal representation" that a sinner could be assured of the right to claim salvation for themselves.⁷¹ Fraser's argument for a legal right may not resonate with modern readers, but he understood it was necessary within his context, which struggled with hyper-Calvinism. He fought legalism with the claim

⁷¹ *JF*, 87. Fraser spoke of Christ as a sinner's "legal representation," meaning Christ stood in the place of all sinners and supplied the right to hope for salvation. For the elect Christ was much more than a legal representative, through the covenant he became the elects' Savior and Lord. See, *SCSM*, 49.

for a legal right, and he hoped it would foster greater assurance among doubting believers.⁷²

The English Divine, Anthony Burgess' covenant theology provides insight into Fraser's resolve to establish a legal right or interest to all sinners through the covenant of grace. Burgess did not speak of the covenant of grace as a universal covenant, but still accepted both the elect and the reprobate enjoyed an interest in the covenant of grace.⁷³ He explained the covenant of grace was conferred "in an external, and invisible administration, by the Word and Sacraments." Thus, in a similar manner to Fraser, he recognized "because all know not the work of Grace, to whom this Covenant is externally administered, hence ariseth that necessary distinction of an external Covenant, and an internall."⁷⁴ He defined the external covenant as "an outward visible manner God doth own a people, and they externally professe their owning of him; but yet in their hearts and souls they do not stedfastly cleave unto God, and faithfully keep this Covenant in the Conditions thereof."⁷⁵

Burgess qualified his remarks by focusing his discussion upon the internal element of the covenant,

⁷² Fraser was troubled by what he considered to be the hyper-Calvinistic and legalistic spirit of his day. Such a spirit led many weak-minded Christians to doubt their salvation and encouraged speculation as to one's eternal state rather than exhorting people to turn to Christ. See, *JF*, 137. Torrance relates Fraser's frustrations to his rejection of Reformed orthodoxy, but this thesis argues that Fraser's objections to legalism were more accurately directed at Baxter's neonomianism and conditionalism introduced by hypothetical universalism. See, *ST*, 182.

⁷³ Rutherford, identified as a staunch supporter of particularism based on his supralapsarian convictions, acknowledged when considered "formally, or *in abstracto*, it [the covenant of grace] applies to all within the visible Church." He qualified his remarks, stating "but considered *in concreto*, the Lord carries on the covenant in such and such a way commensurably with the decrees of Election and Reprobation." Rutherford's conclusion that the covenant of grace was defined most properly as an exclusive covenant for the elect did not preclude him from recognizing that the covenant could have a broader application. Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened*, 94.

⁷⁴ Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, 393.

⁷⁵ Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, 394. Durham similarly connected the gospel with the external covenant of grace, "And God having thus said and sworn anent this external covenant, for this very end, that the hearers of the gospel may know, that they who receive Christ offered therein, shall have life, it is warrant sufficient to believe on him for life: it's also for this end that he hath put seals to the covenant, circumcision and the passover in the old, and baptism and the Lord's supper in the new testaments; where are extended, not only to the elect, but to professors in the visible church, that every one, who is baptized and admitted to the communion, may have confirmation of this, that the offer, that God maketh of life through Christ, is a true and real offer, and will be made good to the persons that shall receive it, and so perform the condition." See, *CC*, 11-12.

The internal, or inward Covenant is that whereby God doth in a Spiritual powerful manner take a people to him, working in their hearts all those gifts and graces promised in the Covenant, as regeneration, remission of sinne, adoption, and the like: And in this sense onely the truly godly are in the Covenant, and they are onely Gods people, and he their God.⁷⁶

Burgess' remarks reflect Fraser's view that all within the visible church have some interest in the covenant of grace. Regarding the nature of the covenant itself there was fundamental agreement between Burgess and Fraser that the elect are saved through the means of God's covenant, but the reprobate within the visible church still have an interest in the covenant of grace. Since including the reprobate in the covenant of grace in some form was part of 17th century orthodoxy, it underlines the need for greater precision when assessing Fraser's theological arguments.

7.4: Understanding the Nature of Condition in the Absolute Covenant of Grace

Attention will now turn to analyzing how Fraser understood the nature of faith as a condition of the covenant. Though he was not comfortable with the term 'condition' because of his efforts to distance himself from Baxter, Fraser recognized the necessity of faith for personally applying the general covenantal promises. The universal design of Christ's redemption and covenant established a warrant to believe, while the necessity of faith served as a catalyst, challenging those within the visible church. God's command and the warrant of Christ's provision demanded a response. As Fraser explained, "By coming to him we get Life; there is no Life but through, or coming to, and receiving of Christ."⁷⁷

The external aspect of the covenant of grace imparted the legal right to the promise of salvation to all those within the visible church but not salvation itself. All within the covenant community were forced to accept the sobering reality that all who failed to use the covenant of grace were destined to receive God's covenantal curses.⁷⁸ According to Fraser, God employed his commands and his covenant, both of which directed recipients to Christ, as the means of eliciting faith. Faith was born

⁷⁶ Burgess, *Spiritual Refining*, 394.

⁷⁷ *JF*, 189.

⁷⁸ *JF*, 297.

in the heart of the elect individual by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. As a result, the elect individual entered into an internal covenant with God, resulting in his sure salvation.⁷⁹ Faith was the appropriate response to the covenantal promises and was God's ordained instrumental means by which salvation was personally applied to the elect.⁸⁰

According to Fraser, God's requirement of faith did not produce a conditional or legalistic covenant, nor did he consider such an obligation to be inconsistent with his argument for the absoluteness of the covenant of grace. The majority of his Reformed contemporaries agreed with him. They affirmed the necessity of faith while at the same time arguing for an absolute covenant based on God's eternal decree. The covenant provided the context wherein God's sovereign grace was honored and man's diligence was required. Several modern critics of post-Reformation federalism maintain that rather than reaching the perfect balance between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, Reformed orthodoxy during this period transformed the covenant of grace into a legalistic contract.⁸¹

If these modern critics of post-Reformation orthodoxy are correct, such charges should include Fraser. It has been argued that Fraser's modifications to the traditional particularists' interpretation of Christ's redemption and of the covenant of grace were ancillary, rather than representing a fundamental paradigm shift. Consequently, Fraser is also implicated in the charges by modern critics. A study of Fraser's theology demonstrates modern criticisms are misdirected: They should apply more to Baxter than Fraser. It was his neonomianism, paralleling the teachings of continental hypothetical universalism, which irreparably altered the covenant of grace, creating a new covenant of works.

McGrath reminds his readers that when interpreting Baxter's neonomianism one must remember "the importance of John Cameron and Moses Amyraut in

⁷⁹ *JF*, 277.

⁸⁰ Fraser explained that "Faith is not properly the Condition of the Covenant of Grace; it is but a Mean and Instrument whereby we come to possess and enjoy what before we had a Title unto, Faith is not our Title but a receiving of our Title." *JF*, 119.

⁸¹ See, J.B. Torrance, "Covenant or Contract?", 55. Torrance contends that in an effort to uphold the costly claims of grace, many Reformed theologians during the post-Reformation period actually created a new form of legalism. Miller, likewise, argues that Reformed orthodoxy unbiblically confounded the nature of grace. See, Miller, *The New England Mind*, 367. Kendall goes so far as to refer to the Westminsterian proponents of particularism as "crypto-Arminians," based on their rendering of the covenant of grace. *CEC*, 208-209.

Baxter's theology of predestination and the nature of faith." He explained that with the emergence of Baxterianism the issues of "covenant condition and the nature of covenant righteousness" fostered a dramatic shift in covenantal thought.⁸² Such a shift occurred because Baxter defined the covenant of grace as a compact similar to the covenant granted to Adam, though less demanding. Whereas Adam had the stipulation of total obedience, the new covenant, according to Baxter, lessened the demands of the covenant, promising eternal life as a benefit of faith and sincere obedience.⁸³

On the surface, Baxter's description of the covenant of grace appeared orthodox, given that many orthodox theologians had spoken of the covenantal stipulations of faith and obedience. However, there was a significant difference between Baxter and particularists who argued for an absolute covenant of grace. According to Fraser and the Reformed orthodox, the elect were saved through Christ's substitutionary merits, while Baxter argued that faith and sincere obedience were the elect's righteousness.⁸⁴ Consequently it was ultimately faith that saved sinners, not Christ. Christ's redemption and the covenant he purchased through his blood was merely God's provision to enable sinners to save themselves.⁸⁵ Fraser and the other absolutists wholeheartedly rejected such a conditional view of salvation, declaring Baxter's formulation exchanged the efficacious work of Christ for the works of sinners.

Baxter's arguments for a truly conditional covenant of grace made him and the other hypothetical universalists more susceptible to the charges of legalism. However, it is important to determine how Fraser and the majority of the Reformed orthodoxy avoided the pitfall of legalism, given their insistence that faith was a

⁸² McGrath, *Puritans*, 174. McGrath comments, "The Westminster Assembly appears to have emphasized both the sovereignty of God's initiative and the equal importance of a person's faith, yet in such a way as to minimize the notion that the covenant was conditional," 175.

⁸³ *AJ*, 290 and *RR*, 257-260.

⁸⁴ Fraser affirmed the absolute end of the covenant to result in the salvation of the elect, yet he added that God's purpose in the covenant extended beyond the parameters of the doctrine of election. See, *JF*, 213-214. Fraser expressed his disapproval of Baxter's view of condition, "But O how jejune and empty are the Discourses of most, anent this sublime Mystery, and how flat and full make they the Business of the Mystery of the Gospel, who maintain, that as the Lord required perfect Obedience, as the Condition of the first Covenant; so He requireth a cordial Assent to the Truths of the Gospel, and sincere Obedience flowing therefrom, as the Condition of the Second Covenant." *JFSF*, 13.

⁸⁵ Faith, according to Baxter, represented a moral condition by which the elect merited salvation. See, *OJ*, 69.

necessary condition of the covenant of grace. To do this one must examine the differences between recognizing faith as an instrumental means and stating that faith is a moral condition of the covenant of grace. Clarifying the differences between Baxter and the orthodox position is essential when interpreting statements like Rutherford's, "Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is clearly a condition of the Righteousness of Faith, as Doing is of the Righteousness which is of the Law."⁸⁶

Rutherford explained that faith is the means by which the elect lay hold of Christ, "not as a Work, but a necessary condition required of us."⁸⁷ Rutherford distinguished the concept of 'condition' from that of 'work.' He agreed that the work of total obedience was the condition required of Adam but rejected the notion that all conditions implied works. Though a condition, faith was also a gift, flowing from Christ's work. According to Rutherford, the only moral condition of the covenant of grace was Christ's blood. It was his work, his blood that fulfilled not only the law's demands but also supplied the elect with the salvation which they could not merit by any means, including faith.

Faith could be regarded as a benefit of the covenant as well as a condition. This meant that faith was defined as an instrumental means as opposed to a moral condition. This helped distance Reformed orthodoxy and Fraser from Baxter's legalism and also served to soften their definition of conditionality. It points to an inconsistency between several modern critics' views about the particularists' covenantal thinking and what those 17th century theologians actually taught. It will be argued that Reformed orthodoxy did not, as has been alleged, describe faith as a *quid pro quo* within the covenant of grace but rather as a *sine qua non*.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ CD, 589.

⁸⁷ CD, 594.

⁸⁸ *Quid pro quo*, 'this for that.' A *quid pro quo* view of the covenant relates to a strict bilateral compact, wherein God promises salvation based on man's ability to fulfill the covenantal terms. *Sine qua non*, 'without which none.' A *sine qua non* view of the covenant is compatible with the perspective that faith is a necessary component in the covenant, without which no internal covenant exists, but it does not assume man's ability to fulfill the covenantal stipulations. In light of faith being identified as a *sine qua non* and not a true moral condition, as stipulated by the hypothetical universalists and neonomians, some particularists were not comfortable with the language of faith as a 'condition,' but still affirm it is essential for applying the covenant promises personally. See, Macleod, *Scottish Theology*, 148; Moore, 'Christ is Dead for Him,' 79 and Owen, *The Doctrine of Justification*, 157.

Fraser considered the notion that God's covenant represented a *quid pro quo* compact utterly inconsistent with his definition of faith and the nature of the covenant in which God's purposes to save took ultimate priority. Like Rutherford, he maintained faith was neither the means of gaining entrance into the covenant of grace nor the principal means by which the benefits of the covenant were appropriated.⁸⁹ God's sovereign purpose superseded any conditional elements in the covenant of grace because the very condition of faith was itself promised.⁹⁰

Whether Fraser viewed the covenant of grace as a bilateral or as a unilateral covenant, he never assumed this covenant was a contract between equals.⁹¹ Fraser wrote, "God is the first Contracter in the Covenant of Grace, and not Man." When faith is the covenantal *sine qua non* this did not hinder God's ability to fulfill his sovereign purposes, becoming instead the means by which God brought about all things in accordance with his eternal decrees. The efficacy of God's covenant was not only based on his eternal decree, but on the redemptive work of his Son. Fraser explained that "The Lord is primus in Obligatione, and is first bound."⁹² The success of the covenant of grace was chiefly dependent on Christ, who not only established it and instituted its conditions but ensured its success for the elect.⁹³ It was this aspect

⁸⁹ Rutherford stated, "We are not taken into Covenant by Faith; neither we nor Scripture speak so: Taking us in Covenant, is before we can believe." *CD*, 594. Fraser used Rutherford's understanding of being taken into the covenant of grace prior to possessing the full benefits promised therein. See, *JF*, 247.

⁹⁰ *SCSM*, 22-23. Fraser, thus, expressed his agreement with Gib, who wrote, "As for those that are bestowed upon condition; the condition on which they are bestowed, is actually purchased and procured for us,--upon no condition of faith." *DD*, 90. He also affirmed with Owen, "Faith, which is this *Condition*, is it self procured by the Death of Christ, for them for whom he Died, to be freely bestowed on them, without the prescription of any such *Condition* as on whose fulfilling, the Collation of it should depend." *ODC*, 34.

⁹¹ Lyall has researched the legal terminology for covenants during the post-Reformation period, and he has highlighted the flexibility of covenant thought and provided interesting insights into the theological categories of unilateral and bilateral views on the covenant of grace. See, Lyall, *Of Metaphors*, 11. Burgess provided a helpful qualification of the relationship between God as the Promiser and man as the responder in the covenant of grace, arguing that though it might be proper to speak of the covenant of grace as a covenant, it should not be thought of merely in terms of a human covenant because man's consent is not antecedent to the establishment of this spiritual covenant. See, Burgess, A., *Vindiciae Legis: Or, A Vindication of the Morall Law and the Covenants, From the Errours of Papists, Arminians, Socinians, and More Especially Antinomians*. (London: 1646), 121-122.

⁹² *SCSM*, 40.

⁹³ Ferguson describes the Reformed orthodox position, stating, "The conditions for its [the covenant of grace's] fulfillment devolved on the Mediator, rather than on those for whom the covenant is made."

of the covenant of grace which distinguished it from the covenant of works and differentiated it from the more legalistic covenantal formulations of Baxter, the hypothetical universalists and the Arminians. Since they defended both the absolute nature of the covenant of grace and the instrumental quality of faith, the charge that Fraser and the Reformed orthodox taught a *quid pro quo* doctrine of the covenantal relationship cannot be sustained.

7.5: Conclusion

Fraser relied upon his federal framework to discover a more objective ground for personal assurance.⁹⁴ In so doing, Fraser demonstrated both a commitment to, and reliance upon, the fundamental elements of Reformed orthodoxy. He recognized the priority of God's covenant, claiming it alone established the right of those within the visible church to plead God's promises for their salvation. In addition to gaining the right to seek salvation, Fraser affirmed the elect actually received salvation through the means of the covenant. Therefore, Fraser like his Reformed contemporaries, defended the definition of the covenant of grace as an absolute covenant in all respects against Baxter's conditional and legalistic doctrine of God's covenant.

During the course of his defense of Reformed orthodoxy, Fraser deviated from the typical particularists' description of the covenant of grace by broadening the parameters of the covenant to include both the elect and the reprobate. This broadening was the product of Fraser's argument that the visible church was the proper recipient of the covenant promises, as opposed to the view that the covenant of grace was given solely to the elect, or what might be termed the invisible church. To handle the complexities of God's covenantal dealings with both the visible and invisible church, Fraser developed his concept of the two-fold covenant of grace. The covenant bestowed covenantal blessings upon the visible church, while the Holy Spirit applied these benefits in a personal manner to the elect or invisible church. The

Ferguson, S. B., *John Owen on the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 24-25.

⁹⁴ Fraser was not unique in employing God's covenant as a means of discovering greater assurance. Von Rohr, states, "The covenant, in combining divine decree and human decision, also served a pastoral purpose, and thus it will likewise be affirmed that the often anguished Puritan search for personal assurance of salvation found substantial assuagement in covenant certainty." Von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace*, 2.

covenant of grace, therefore, reflected Christ's two-fold intention in his work of redemption, communicating one thing to the reprobate and another to the elect.

Despite the presence of his two-fold covenant of grace, there was no indication Fraser ever wavered in his commitment to defend the absolute nature of God's purposes.⁹⁵ Fraser avowed a two-fold absolute covenant, wherein God dealt with both the elect and the reprobate. Fraser challenged the traditional particularists to consider incorporating the reprobate into the covenant of grace, not to introduce a hypothetical dimension to redemption, but rather to establish the foundation upon which the reprobate would be judged.

He acknowledged faith as an instrumental means ordained by God to convey salvation to the elect and as a benefit flowing to the elect through the covenant. Consequently, faith functioned as the distinguishing feature between those who received merely the external benefits of God's covenant and those who profited from the full, internal blessings of the covenant. The necessity of faith as an instrumental means of saving the elect, Fraser maintained, neither introduced an inconsistency in his argument nor automatically transformed the covenant of grace into another legalistic covenant. He believed that his view of the two-fold covenant of grace communicated a real privilege to the entire visible church without sacrificing the efficacy of the covenant as a means of saving the elect. None within the visible church should doubt their interest in Christ's redemption. None should question the warrant to believe. Additionally, Fraser challenged believers to look again to Christ to perceive the all-sufficiency of God's absolute promise to save. Fraser, therefore, not only considered his formulation of the covenant of grace orthodox, but also understood his covenantal paradigm to offer the greatest possibility for sustainable assurance.

⁹⁵ *JF*, 266.

CHAPTER VIII: JUSTIFYING FAITH

8.1: Introduction

The two previous chapters have highlighted Fraser's efforts to strengthen his affinity with Calvin and the Post-Reformation particularists by arguing that all God's dealings with redeemed sinners were a product of God's absolute decrees communicated through the covenant of grace. Fraser emphasized the foundational aspects of God's sovereign decree and his unconditional covenant in order to preserve a more objective ground for faith and assurance. He did this in response to Baxter, whom Fraser condemned for formulating an overly subjective view of Christ's redemption and the believer's justification. In his response to Baxter's neonomianism, however, he did not exclude all subjective aspects from his doctrine of redemption. This chapter will examine Fraser's arguments regarding the nature and function of justifying faith and determine how they modified his doctrine of redemption.¹

Fraser maintained faith was non-negotiable, for without it Christ's work of redemption remained an abstraction and its saving benefits were withheld. Faith played an essential role in transforming the general promises of God's salvation into a personal testimony of God's grace and favor. It was through faith that the believer participated in the plan of redemption turning the message of Christ's redemption from an abstraction into a personal promise from God. Fraser explained it was

¹ Fraser's use of scholastic and legal terminology was particularly evident in his theology of justifying faith. The terminology Fraser employed was not arbitrary, and much of it has been retained in this examination because it provides the precision necessary to distinguish subtle nuances. For example, he spoke of the 'warrant' of faith, a term more likely used by modern philosophers or lawyers than theologians, because it best communicated that an individual was 'intellectually justified' and 'rightly compelled' to believe a particular truth. For research regarding the effect of legal language on Post-Reformation scholastic theology, see Lyall, F., "Of Metaphors and Analogies: Legal Language and Covenant Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 32 (1979). and Karlberg, M. W., "Moses and Christ--The Place of Law in Seventeenth-Century Puritanism," *Trinity Journal* 10 (1989).

through the process of personally applying the promises of God that “the spiritual Glory, Excellency and Sufficiency that is in Christ, and the Possibility of Salvation discovered” were “bought near to the Soul.”²

This chapter will analyze Fraser’s definitions of justification and justifying faith and his efforts to develop a more biblically accurate approach to God’s work in saving the redeemed.³ In particular, an evaluation will be made of the effectiveness of his very precise definition of justifying faith and whether it substantiated his claims to have strengthened assurance. Having examined those definitions of justification Fraser deemed most erroneous, his own definition will be outlined with specific reference to his differences with Baxter. Fraser’s definition of faith will be split into three parts: the warrant for faith; the object of faith; the nature of faith.

8.2: Concerns over the Doctrine of Justification

The chief aim of Fraser’s entire writings was to articulate a more objective ground for personal assurance. Consequently, it is not surprising he intentionally located assurance within the event of justification, nor that he identified those theologians who sought to divorce assurance from the direct act of faith as his enemies.⁴

Those responsible for separating faith from assurance held doctrines of justification that erred towards legalism.⁵ Care needs to be taken with the term ‘legalism’ within the context of the 16th and 17th centuries. Much like ‘Arminian,’ the term was over used and not always accurately employed. Nevertheless, ‘legalism’ conveyed the idea something had to be added to the work of Christ’s redemption if a sinner was to be saved. Fraser renounced many forms of legalism on the basis that they obscured the grace of God and the all-sufficiency of Christ’s redemption.

When Protestant Reformers wished to illustrate the evils of legalism, the first example to which they turned was the Roman Catholic Church. It represented the

² *JFSF*, 246.

³ It is surprising that despite the fact that the vast majority of Fraser’s *A Treatise on of Justifying Faith* was dedicated to defining the nature, object and warrant of faith, the topic has rarely been incorporated into previous critiques of Fraser’s theology. One reason for this neglect is Fraser’s doctrine of universal redemption has been extracted from the broader context of his arguments for assurance. It is precisely because this thesis identifies the quest for assurance as the driving force behind much of Fraser’s work that his thoughts on justification and justifying faith cannot be ignored.

⁴ See, Section 4.4.2 of this thesis.

⁵ Fraser cited Halyburton as someone else who had identified the increasingly problematic impact legalistic preaching was having on the churches in Britain during the 17th century. See, *JFSF*, v.

original and most powerful opponent of the biblical doctrine of justification. Luther famously stated that it was upon this article the church either stands or falls, and it was the Reformers' unequivocal judgment that the Roman Catholic Church had fallen by failing to acknowledge *solus Christus* as the object of justification.

Though it had been over a hundred years since the Scottish Reformation by the time Fraser wrote, he still criticized what he saw as the man-centered, anti-gospel religion of the Roman Catholic Church, and rejected the "groundless faith" propagated by the "Papists." It was 'groundless' because it encouraged sinners to "close with Christ to get better, but not with Him as the Righteous One."⁶ He insisted the Catholic Church deserved the title of legalistic religion because it taught individuals to rest for salvation on their own obedience rather than the complete righteousness of Christ.⁷

During the 17th century Reformers became increasingly concerned about the influence of Arminian legalism. The fear of all things Arminian, so gripped Reformed orthodoxy in the 17th century that precise definitions became difficult. Despite some ambiguity in defining Arminianism, there was a general agreement among Reformed theologians that Arminius stripped Christ's redemptive work of its efficacy, in turn elevating the human contribution to salvation in such way that it undermined the gracious nature of the gospel.

According to Arminius, Christ supplied humankind with the prevenient grace through which sinners were empowered either to save themselves or reject God's offer of salvation.⁸ Faith only initiated a process which might in time lead to justification. In his view neither Christ's redemption nor man's response in faith ensured a person's justification.⁹ Success in salvation depended upon the believer's performance, not solely upon Christ's merits. Consequently, Fraser denounced Arminianism as a legalistic perversion of Christianity.

⁶ *JFSF*, 160.

⁷ *JFSF*, 261.

⁸ *WA*, I.424. See also, *JFSF*, 261.

⁹ *JF*, 32. Arminius stressed the need for grace for all aspects of the process of salvation, but this was a common grace provided indiscriminately to all.

However, Fraser marked out Baxter as a much more formidable adversary in his battle to preserve orthodoxy.¹⁰ A significant portion of Fraser's arguments against legalism in the 17th century church were aimed at Baxter with Fraser making it his personal goal to expunge Baxter's influence on the Reformed church. Fraser lamented the subtle deceitfulness of this new wave of legalism,

This [legalistic] Opinion is the more dangerous, that it hath severals, who were reputed good men, to countenance it; and the lurking Poison is the less discernable, because it is set off with the specious Pretext of Holiness, and religious Duties; and that it may be the less Suspected, it is covered with an Evangelical Tincture; and this the Heart of the unwary Reader is soon captived, and, by Reason of the Subtility of this legal Set of Spirit, the Danger is not so easily seen.¹¹

Fraser concluded Baxterianism was even more dangerous because it appeared at first glance to be orthodox. The "Evangelical Tincture" functioned like a mask to hide the true face of Baxter's legalism. He accused Baxter of deceiving unsuspecting believers by appealing to their desire to be pious, maintaining Baxter ultimately led believers away from Christ by causing them to rest on their own works for justification. He acknowledged Baxter had attempted to lessen the requirements for justification by stipulating sincere, rather than perfect, obedience. However, any introduction of human merit in the doctrine of justification resulted in the same conclusion, that salvation was reckoned as a debt, not a grace.¹²

Fraser argued importing any aspect of debt into the covenant of grace denigrated the design and purpose of the second covenant by encouraging individuals to rely on the natural inclinations of their sinful hearts. He wrote, "'Tis natural for Men to trust in themselves, and Duties for that Covenant, promising of Life upon Condition of obedience, is naturally engraven upon every Man's Heart."¹³

¹⁰ The Associate Synod, who were greatly influenced by Fraser's teachings, echoed his condemnation, "A more refined, and consequently, a more dangerous, scheme of Arminianism was hatched and vented in England, by Mr Richard Baxter; which, as it came nearer to the legal terms that some time before had been used by divines of reputed orthodoxy." See, Associate Presbytery, *Act of the Associate Presbytery, Concerning the Doctrine of Grace* (Edinburgh, Neill and Company, 1789), v.

¹¹ *JF*, 239.

¹² *JF*, 230-231.

¹³ *JF*, 266.

A person would never find righteousness by looking within or by following the leadings of his naturally corrupt heart. The believer's only hope was to move his gaze from himself and cling to the sole object able to justify—Jesus Christ.

Looking to Christ and away from oneself, according to Fraser, was the only means whereby a sinful individual's conscience would be satisfied God had provided salvation. Consequently, Fraser denounced Baxter's doctrine of justification which directed individuals to build upon Christ's work in order to fulfill the law's demands, "Legalism tended to take us in the least, off the foundation, Christ Jesus, and settle us on our selves."¹⁴ Legalism replaced Christ by the personal righteousness of the believer—the subject of faith supplants the object of faith.

To counter, Fraser restated the biblical and Reformed doctrine of justifying faith. Before outlining his response to Baxter, the influence of Antinomianism upon Baxter's doctrine of justification needs to be understood since it profoundly affected Fraser's reaction to Baxter.¹⁵

8.3: Baxter's Response of the Antinomian Doctrine of Justification

In 1645, John Saltmarsh published a treatise entitled *Free Grace*.¹⁶ Baxter read the treatise and discovered Saltmarsh argued for a doctrine of eternal justification as logical deduction of God's absolute decree of predestination, effectively separating justification from personal faith.¹⁷ Saltmarsh proposed Christ established a covenant of grace with the elect without condition. Faith became inconsequential functioning as a mere acknowledgement of God's love shown in Christ and becoming the means by which the Holy Spirit revealed an individual's justified status.¹⁸ What mattered was God's eternal election, not man's response to it.

¹⁴ *JF*, iii.

¹⁵ It is outside the scope of this thesis, however, to provide an in depth analysis of Antinomianism. For a more extensive comparison of Baxter and Antinomianism, see, Cooper, T., *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Aldershot [UK]: Ashgate, 2001). See, Section 3.4 of this thesis for discussion of several of the key features of Baxter's doctrine of redemption. An examination of Baxter's theology of justification and justifying faith appears in this chapter because it allows for greater detail with respect to his notion of conditionality, which served as a catalyst for Fraser's clarification of justifying faith as an instrumental means through which an individual is imputed with Christ's righteousness.

¹⁶ Saltmarsh, J., *Free-Grace, Or The Flowings of Christs Blood to Sinners* (London: 1645).

¹⁷ *RR*, 204.

¹⁸ Saltmarsh, *Free-Grace*, 95. Also see another Antinomian, Eaton, J., *The Honey-Combe of Free Justification by Christ Alone* (1642).

Saltmarsh also claimed sin had no real effect on a person's acceptance as righteous before God.¹⁹ Sin could rob persons of their comfort of justification but could not alter the divine decree that they were saved.²⁰ Saltmarsh went so far as to teach that God's predestining decree would supersede even the sin of unbelief.²¹

Baxter responded decisively by condemning the deterministic nature of Saltmarsh's doctrine of eternal justification. In the process, he became increasingly insecure about his own theology and slowly re-evaluated and re-formulated his understanding of God's decrees, Christ's redemption, and the doctrine of justification, to compensate for the inaccuracies of the Antinomian perspective.²² Baxter moved away from any teaching associated with Antinomian heterodoxy, ultimately denouncing particular redemption and the absoluteness of God's decrees in favor of universal redemption and a conditional covenant of grace. As a result, Baxter not only distanced himself from Antinomianism, he also moved away from the majority of Reformed thinkers in the 17th century, including Fraser.²³

8.4: Baxter's Neonomianism

Through a systematic reassessment of his own theology, Baxter insulated himself against overemphasizing the objective aspects of God's work to save his people from their sins by adopting an extremely subjective and conditional position on the doctrine of justification.²⁴ Baxter explained, "Our deliverance is conditionally from the curse of the Law; viz. if we will obey the Gospel."²⁵ Having formerly held to a doctrine of particular redemption teaching that Christ died absolutely for the elect, he now proposed Christ's redemption was universal and the benefits were bestowed

¹⁹ Saltmarsh and those who were categorized as Antinomians received their name because of their stance that sin had absolutely no influence on justification, and therefore, obedience or disobedience to God's law was of no consequence.

²⁰ *RR*, 204.

²¹ Saltmarsh, J., *The Fountaine of Free Grace Opened* (London: 1648), 6.

²² *RR*, 204.

²³ *RR*, 202. Packer remarks concerning the radical effect Antinomianism had on Baxter's theology, "Antinomianism was the midwife which finally brought Baxter's system to birth." He notes that by 1653 Baxter's theological system was complete and remained unchanged for the rest of his life.

²⁴ The term 'subjective' has been chosen to highlight Baxter's emphasis on an individual's responsibility in salvation in contrast to the more 'objective' approach taken by Fraser and the majority of Post-Reformation Reformers, who shifted the focus away from the individual and towards the sovereign grace of God in saving the elect.

²⁵ *AJ*, 87.

conditionally, through a provisional covenant. This new covenant, rather than being an object Christ died to secure, was instead the reward of Christ's redemptive work.²⁶ He asserted, "Christ hath by his Redemption of all obtained a *Novum jus Imperii* over all, and is *Rector derivative Supremus*."²⁷ Baxter believed that Christ satisfied and suspended the demands of the old covenant and purchased the right for God to deal with his people according to the lesser stipulations of the new covenant.²⁸

Baxter described the new covenant as gracious not because it cancelled all debts nor because Christ's righteousness was conveyed by it, but because Christ created new stipulations which were now obtainable. Christ removed one debt and created another so that the Christian remained "under a Law."²⁹ The new legal covenant meant the believer's liberation from sin and death were conditionally procured and granted through Christ's redemption.³⁰ Furthermore, Baxter not only denied Christ's redemption alone purchased an individual's freedom but also claimed no believer would be granted an "absolute Discharge" in this life. The reason he denied an absolute discharge in this life, and the assurance that accompanied it, was his belief God's pronouncement of justification would be made on the basis of an individual remaining faithful to the end of his life. Baxter explained that "For even when we do perform the Condition, yet shall the Discharge remain conditional till we have quite finished our performance. For it is not one instantaneous Act of believing which shall quite discharge us; but a continued Faith."³¹

The conditional nature of justification based on the conditional nature of the covenant of grace implied justification was dependent upon sanctification.³²

²⁶ He stated, "That which Christ did by his merits was to procure the new Covenant." Baxter, *A Treatise of Justifying Righteousness*, 66.

²⁷ *URM*, 37. '*Novum jus Imperii*,' relates to the bestowal of a new law. '*Rector derivative Supremus*,' communicates that Christ has been granted the right of supreme governor over this new law. The concept of Christ as Judge radically shaped Baxter understanding of Christ's being Redeemer.

²⁸ Thus Christ did not "prevent the wrath deserved, but only the desert of wrath." Baxter, *AJ*, 86.

²⁹ Baxter, *A Treatise of Justifying Righteousness*, preface. Baxter wrote, "The Law of Works is not abrogated, or repealed, but dispensed with, or relaxed." Baxter, *AJ*, 80.

³⁰ *AJ*, 81.

³¹ *AJ*, 81-82.

³² Accordingly, Baxterianism seemed to share similarities with the legalism of both the Roman Catholic Church and the teachings of Arminius, wherein final justification depended upon the success of the believer's efforts to live an obedient life. Baxter, therefore, separated himself from his Reformed contemporaries who defined justification as a forensic category, wherein the believer is declared completely righteous based on Christ's righteousness being imputed to him.

According to Baxter a person was justified conditionally when he first believed and received the gospel. He qualified the benefits of this initial justification, stating “All the fruits of Christs Merits and Satisfaction are not ours upon our first believing (much less before). But we receive them by degrees: we have new pardon daily of new sins.”³³ The progressive possession of Christ’s merits was based on Baxter’s hypothesis that, “He [Christ] suffered, to save us from suffering; but he *obeyed not to save us from obeying*, but to bring us to Obedience.”³⁴ The need to be pardoned anew daily meant believers were also daily in jeopardy of losing their justification by failing to fulfill the law’s demands.

This doctrine of two-fold justification introduced the distinction between the righteousness which a person receives by the imputation of Christ’s merits by faith and the subsequent righteousness that an individual achieves through obedience to the law. Baxter argued that, “those only shall have part in Christs satisfaction, and so in him be legally righteous, who do believe, and obey the Gospel, and so are in themselves Evangelically Righteous.”³⁵ Baxter was clear no one would be finally justified without the meritorious blood of Christ. Final justification, however, was most directly related to the believer’s personal righteousness. His doctrine of justification exchanged the righteousness of Christ for the subjective righteousness of the individual believer. In his *Baxterianism Barefac’d*, Edwards expressed his objections,

The grub of Mr. B's Notions lies here, as retaining this in it, that an inward special work of Grace (to speak more favourably of him than ever yet I could see ground for) being the material Righteousness of a Sinner's Justification before God, of consequence it must be, that where this is truly wrought and drawn forth into sincere acts of Obedience, then, thence and there he rationally concludes according to his own *moral Swasion*, that there needs not any thing of the Righteousness of Christ, either to acquit such in whom it is created from the charge of Sin, or give them a forensick Title unto Glory. This

³³ Baxter, *A Treatise of Justifying Righteousness*, preface.

³⁴ Baxter, *A Treatise of Justifying Righteousness*, 58.

³⁵ *AJ*, 107-108.

is the *secret Radix* on which all his Antichristian Pile and Fabrick of Divinity is laid and built.³⁶

Defining justification in relation to the inward work of the Holy Spirit represented a significant shift away from the accepted Reformed position of forensic justification. Baxter disavowed the doctrine of double imputation, opting for a justification wherein Christ's complete righteousness was not imputed to the believer.³⁷ The believer himself generated the righteousness by which he would be finally justified through "sincere acts of Obedience."³⁸ By faith, therefore, the believer exchanged debts, not disposing of them. Packer explains, "Man is not justified, Baxter insisted, by a fictitious imputed fulfilment of the law of works, but in virtue of a real, personal compliance with the terms of the new law of grace."³⁹

Baxter explained the relationship between Christ's righteousness as imputed to the believer and the remaining obligation or debt as follows,

Christ was made under the Law, (and not under the Gospel) fulfilled the Law, (but not the Gospel Covenant) bore the curse of the Law, (but not of the Gospel) and which imposeth a necessity of fulfilling the conditions of the Gospel themselves upon all that will be justified and saved.⁴⁰

In *Universal Redemption of Mankind*, he wrote,

We must further distinguish between Christs Death as *satisfactory to Justice*, and as a *Price meritorious* to purchase further Benefits: For I shall manifest that the former is the immediate next Effect; and that it could not be *Purchasing, meritorious*, no nor *accepted*, but as it is first

³⁶ Edwards, *Baxterianism Barefac'd*, 19.

³⁷ Packer argues that Baxter denied double imputation—the imputation of both Christ's satisfaction for the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of his own righteousness for the believer's justification. See, *RR*, 245. A.C. Clifford challenges Packer's interpretation of Baxter, when he writes, "Contrary to Packer's verdict, his error was not to deny the imputed active obedience of Christ, but to apply the term 'justification' to both pardon and obedience." See, *Atonement*, 194. Regardless of the definition of terms used to describe Baxter's theology, the heart of the matter remains the same. Baxter taught there was a delayed justification whereby the believer personally invoked God's reward through his meritorious obedience.

³⁸ Edwards, *Baxterianism Barefac'd*, 19.

³⁹ *RR*, 245.

⁴⁰ *AJ*, 113.

satisfactory; and that Christ did not Merit or *Purchase* further Benefits
Loco nostro, so far as he did suffer *Loco nostro*.⁴¹

Baxter clearly limited Christ's representation, thereby placing the burden for meriting final justification upon the believer, through a deliberate self-limitation on Christ's part. Christ could have determined to supply a "Price meritorious," but he chose to suffer in the believer's stead without meriting any further benefits.⁴²

According to Fraser, by denying Christ fulfilled all the law's demands on behalf of the elect, including the demand for faith and obedience, Baxter eliminated the possibility for assurance of salvation.⁴³ By basing one's confidence on the "Act of believing," Fraser believed Baxter forfeited the right to "Surety's Righteousness."⁴⁴ He lamented Baxter's erroneous doctrine of justification had gained broader acceptance, fostering an atmosphere of insecurity and robbing many believers of the joy rightfully theirs in Christ and so felt compelled to refute it. Fraser's response detailed a more objective or Christocentric doctrine of justification.

⁴¹ *URM*, 26.

⁴² Packer maintains Baxter probably adopted his theory from Anthony Wotton's and John Goodwin's notion of single imputation. Later, he followed John Bradshaw, who taught both the passive and active obedience of Christ are imputed but "not in the rigid sense." *RR*, 247. Baxter related the active and passive obedience of Christ to the obligations facing the believer in the new covenant, "As the Active Obedience of Christ was not the Righteousness of the second Covenant, or the performing of its Conditions, but of the first, properly called a Legal Righteousness; so also his Passive Obedience and Merit was only to satisfy for the violation of the Covenant of Works, but not at all for the violation of the Covenant of Grace; for that there is no satisfaction made, and there remaineth no sacrifice." *AJ*, 160. Clifford attempts to explain the logic and motivation behind Baxter's view of imputation, "Although Baxter denies that 'Christ's righteousness imputed' is a 'Scripture phrase', he is prepared to include even the active obedience of Christ as part of the 'meritorious cause' of the believer's righteousness. What he rejects is that incoherence of the Beza-Owen theory of imputation. If this is correct, says Baxter, 'we could need no pardon, for he that is reputed to be innocent, by fulfilling all the law, is reputed never to have sinned...Therefore, such an imputation of Christ's righteousness to us would make his satisfaction null or vain.'" *Atonement*, 192. Clifford rejected Packer's proposed interpretation that Baxter only included the passive obedience of Christ in his doctrine of justification. He asserts Baxter taught the double imputation of Christ's righteousness, though a believer was still finally justified through his own obedience to the covenantal demands and not through Christ's merit. Therefore, irrespective of whether Baxter's doctrine of justification is described as a single or double imputation theory, the fact remains he acknowledged Christ's righteousness was not the solitary source of justifying righteousness.

⁴³ Fraser conceded if Antinomianism were false, its error "lay very near truth." Fraser's statements did not endorse Antinomianism but expressed his appreciation to Antinomians who wished to exalt the complete efficacy of Christ's righteousness. Laird, 96. Whyte, who generally has extremely positive things to say about Fraser, strongly criticized Fraser for his heavy handed response to Baxter. See, 97.

⁴⁴ *JF*, ii.

8.5: Christ Is Our Righteousness

In his opposition to Baxterianism, Fraser desperately sought to define the doctrine of justification and justifying faith in a way that would objectify the entire process. Though he disagreed with Antinomianism, he did not think his position on justification and the efficaciousness of Christ's redemption needed to be fundamentally transformed to guard orthodoxy from Antinomianism's threat. Most importantly for Fraser, the individual believer's involvement in justification should in no way detract from the priority of Christ's work to ensure the justification of God's elect. In fact, Fraser attempted to express his doctrine of justifying faith in such a way that even in believing, the object of faith, namely Christ and his complete righteousness, remained fundamental.

Fraser argued strongly for a doctrine of justification that included the double imputation of both Christ's satisfaction and personal righteousness at the moment an individual believed. Upon trusting in Christ, the penitent sinner lacked nothing and could be assured of every blessing promised in the new covenant.⁴⁵ Sinners could find confidence and assurance of salvation in Christ because, "He is a compleat all-sufficient Saviour; he is all their Salvation, Light, Life, Holiness, Freedom from the Law, Favour with God, all is in him; whatever a lost Sinner wants, is in him."⁴⁶ Fraser reasoned since Christ was the incarnation and personification of salvation, insecure sinners should turn from the inconsistency of their obedience and focus on Christ's perfect obedience on their behalf. He identified Christ as not simply a means of salvation but as "Salvation it self."

Fraser's unequivocal pronouncement Christ himself was a sinner's salvation rested upon Christ's establishment of an absolute covenant of grace, when he had been commissioned by the Father to fulfill all the law's demands and secure salvation for the elect. The covenant of grace conveyed Christ's purpose to communicate the benefits of his redemption to the elect. The gospel was not a proclamation of a new, achievable covenant, as Baxter had argued, but rather declared "the End of the Law for Righteousness to them that believe."⁴⁷ Fraser

⁴⁵ Fraser's doctrine of double imputation is related to his teaching that Jesus is both the formal and the material object of justifying faith.

⁴⁶ *SCSM*, 7.

⁴⁷ *SCSM*, 2.

explained that “If Christ came with Law, as he will come at the last Day, then indeed ye might expect a Sentence; and be afraid, and come trembling before him, and might look for no Mercy; but coming without the Law, and with Grace and Mercy and tender Compassion, ye can expect no Wrath, nor Justice.”⁴⁸ Therefore, righteousness could not be found through obedience to any ‘law,’ and promoting a legalistic covenant placed the burden of righteousness on the believer and advanced an anti-gospel religion.⁴⁹

The fact Christ was ‘the End of the Law for Righteousness’ was not an affirmation that Christ’s righteousness was communicated to all sinners *ipso facto*. Fraser did not defend the view Christ’s redemption purchased universal salvation or universal righteousness, or even universal pardon. Whilst the law for righteousness was abolished in the redemption Christ accomplished, this did not imply Christ ceased to be Judge.⁵⁰ Though the gospel of grace included no law, it did not exclude judgment. Those who rejected Christ’s redemption would be condemned, and none would be saved without faith.

Fraser’s denial of universal salvation and universal pardon indicated faith remained an essential element in his understanding of how the elect benefited from Christ’s work. Faith was the instrument through which the Holy Spirit applied the work of Christ’s redemption to the individual, so that the believer could claim with confidence ‘Christ is mine.’⁵¹

One of the primary characteristics of Fraser’s doctrine of justifying faith was the pressure he placed upon the individual sinner to translate the general promises of

⁴⁸ *SCSM*, 15.

⁴⁹ *Meditations*, 189.

⁵⁰ The complementary nature between Christ as Redeemer and Christ as Judge is seen particularly in Fraser’s doctrine of evangelical or gospel wrath.

⁵¹ Shepard, likewise, maintained, “The first Act of Faith, as it unites us to Christ, is not Assurance that he is mine, but a coming to him with Assurance that hereby he is become mine.” See, Chalker, *Calvin and Some Seventeenth Century English Calvinists*, 192. Fraser’s belief that a sinner must perceive a warrant for faith that “Christ is mine” prior to believing appeared to be a departure from the doctrine of assurance espoused by Shepard and Calvin. Shepard denounced positions like Fraser’s as “another extreme.” See, Shepard, *The Sound Believer*, 193. Goodwin made a similar point, arguing that the promise of pardon was in Christ, not merely a naked benefit which could be abstracted from the person. See, Goodwin, T., *Christ Set Forth in His Death: Resurrection, Ascension, Sitting at Gods Right Hand, Intercession, As the Cause of Justification: Object of Justifying Faith. Upon Rom. 8. Ver. 34: Together With a Treatise Discovering the Affectionate Tenderness of Christs Heart Now in Heaven, Unto Sinners on Earth.* (London: W.E. and J.G., 1642), 18-21.

the covenant into particular and personal promises. He denounced the idea that a mere assent to general promises was sufficient. It was part of his pastoral duty to highlight the particular guilt which the law charged against sinners, a guilt only removed by a particular faith in Christ.⁵² If he ever hoped to soothe his conscience which constantly condemned, the sinner must be convinced Christ was given for him. Fraser insisted, “The Law is sad Tidings to all particularly; so that Gospel is good Tidings to all particularly.”⁵³ The universal and general propositions of the gospel were transformed into a particular promise when an individual sinner confidently inserted his name into God’s promise of salvation.⁵⁴

By emphasizing the necessity of faith to take hold of Christ particularly, Fraser elevated the righteousness of Christ as the true object of justifying faith and the primary means by which salvation was secured. He explained,

For Faith looking to Jesus Christ, and all his Benefits in the Promise, it unites the Soul to Christ; and so it beholds Christ, and all the Privileges of the new Covenant as its own, and it now really, and firmly believes its own Salvation.⁵⁵

Fraser maintained his understanding of the particularizing component of faith served to reorient faith towards Christ and away from the individual.

8.6: The Object of Justifying Faith, ‘Christ for Me’

It is important to distinguish between the different senses in which Fraser employed the phrase, ‘the object of justifying faith.’ The complexity of his scholastic argument regarding the object of justifying faith make this difficult but the real differences between Fraser’s ‘instrumental’ and ‘formal’ objects of justifying faith are of considerable significance.⁵⁶

⁵² *JFSF*, 93.

⁵³ *JFSF*, 147. His opposition to the Antinomians was because he considered their doctrine of eternal justification taught Christ’s redemption remained an abstraction, which may or may not be personally and heartily applied to the individual. See, 17, 39, 88, 155, and 224.

⁵⁴ *JF*, 308.

⁵⁵ *JFSF*, 77.

⁵⁶ Fraser also highlighted salvation as the *objectum terminativum materiale*, or the material object to which justifying faith terminates. He understood that by faith a sinner looked to Christ for a particular end, namely the salvation of their souls. Therefore, referring to salvation as the object of justifying faith was considered acceptable as long as Christ, the formal object of justifying faith, was always held in view. Fraser actually referred to Christ as both the formal object of justifying faith and the

The instrumental objects of justifying faith, according to Fraser, were the promises of God as conveyed to all sinners through the gospel. He described them as instrumental because it was through these promises that Christ and his benefits were laid before the hearers of the gospel and through them the Holy Spirit produced the faith by which hearers were justified. The promises were absolute, rather than ‘naked’ and conditional, fully disclosing Christ’s redemption to all who received the gospel. Fraser explained the importance of God’s commands, stating, “For it is not the Offer, Act of Command, or Invitation with which the Sinner ultimately and formally doth close in believing; but this Invitation, Command or Offer warrands me to believe, and makes it my Duty to believe what the Gospel declares, and this Declaration is the proper formal Object of my Belief.”⁵⁷

However, promises rested on something more substantial than words, albeit God’s words.⁵⁸ The credibility of God’s promises was established by the formal object of justifying faith, namely the person and work of Christ.⁵⁹ This was in direct opposition to Baxter’s teaching which Fraser viewed as circular making faith “both Act and Object” and so both irrational and indefensible.⁶⁰ For Fraser the defining object of justifying faith should originate from the actions of Christ as Redeemer and not the acts of the individual seeking to be justified.⁶¹

The stress Fraser laid upon Christ as the formal object of justifying faith was more than an attempt to be Christocentric. He was convinced sinners were more likely to grow in their assurance that salvation was attainable when Christ was clearly displayed. They could move past simple assent and cultivate a more biblical perspective on what it truly meant to believe.

material object of justifying faith. In so doing, he was attempting to express the desire that the penitent sinner had for both Christ and his benefits. Fraser employed John 14:6 to illustrate his point that Christ was the formal object of faith in relation to him being the way, and he was the material object of faith as he was also the life. See, *JFSF*, 102-103, 149-150.

⁵⁷ *JF*, 132.

⁵⁸ Fraser presumed the entire Word of God was properly considered the material object of faith given it was the Word that communicated the promises of salvation and published the sacrifice of Christ on behalf of sinners. See, *ibid.*, 122.

⁵⁹ *JF*, 132.

⁶⁰ *JFSF*, 126.

⁶¹ *JFSF*, 95.

The particular nature of faith and the formal object of faith were linked in Fraser's mind. A particular or justifying belief needed to gain knowledge of Christ, even prior to faith.⁶² An individual should have as full and clear a picture of Christ and the benefits he offered, so that when faith was born in the heart it might grasp the correct object. He explained,

If I promise, and show him a Discharge of the Debt he is called in question for, and convince him of my Veracity; this indeed gives him Ground to believe that he shall be absolved; but to promise him Worlds for believing, can never make him believe, when you give him no objective Evidence of the Truth of what you would have him believe.⁶³

This not only hinted at a tendency towards preparationism, it also formed the foundation upon which Fraser developed the universal scope of Christ's redemption.

Fraser argued that "without founding your Faith on Christ's Sufferings for you, you could not have sufficient Warrant to build that Faith, and warrant that Confidence, the Lord not only warrants, but commands us to have."⁶⁴ This was the reason he taught there must be some type of universality to the redemption of Christ and affirmed the warrant to believe was based on the command of God. Fraser asserted that the redemption of Christ, offered universally, was "the Thing upon which the Command is founded that is the primary warrant for believing."⁶⁵ Christ's redemption functioned both as the formal object of justifying faith and the warrant for believing. He was determined to ensure something substantial lay behind the gospel offer, namely Christ and him crucified for all sinners without distinction.

8.7: The Warrant to Believe, Christ Crucified

Persuading the elect of the trustworthiness of the gospel promises, Fraser acknowledged, was the Holy Spirit's work. However, he maintained a lack of

⁶² *JFSF*, 102.

⁶³ *JFSF*, 58-59. Fraser used the term "Discharge of the Debt," identifying the forgiveness Christ's redemption supplies.

⁶⁴ *JFSF*, 131.

⁶⁵ *JFSF*, 132. Compare James Durham's view, "Christ's death for you is not the formal ground nor warrant of your faith, nor yet of the offer of the gospel, but the Lord's will warranting you to believe, and calling for it from you, and his commanding you to rest upon Christ for the attaining of righteousness as he is offered in the gospel." See, Durham, *The Errors*, 10.

knowledge was the largest stumbling block to belief. Fraser stated, “According to our Knowledge and Apprehension of the Grounds, so will our Faith be.”⁶⁶

Whilst conceding “full Perswasion” of Christ would only be gained after an individual believed, he claimed believing demanded an individual be convinced Christ was given for “Remission of Sins.”⁶⁷ The only logical way Fraser could conceive of providing the necessary justification for true faith was to defend the notion Christ was a universal Redeemer. The universal scope of Christ’s redemption implied all sinners were able to speak of Christ as being given ‘for me.’

Many of Fraser’s critics challenged his assumption a sinner should be persuaded prior to faith that Christ was given ‘for me’ in order to foster true belief and assurance. Nevertheless, Fraser was utterly convinced this personalization of God’s promise of salvation was essential for faith to rest on its proper object and for the sinner’s soul to find the comfort and assurance. He claimed even if a person recognized Christ had redeemed numerous other sinners he would never overcome the deafening voice of the law’s condemnation unless yet he had a specific knowledge that Christ redeemed him. The sinner needed to say positively Christ was given ‘for me.’⁶⁸

Within Fraser’s doctrine of universal redemption, it is necessary to distinguish between the intrinsic and extrinsic warrants for justifying faith, categories which parallel the distinction made previously between the instrumental and formal objects of justifying faith. The extrinsic warrant of faith was found in the promises of God, which communicated to all who heard the gospel that Christ was indeed a Redeemer sufficient to save all sinners and the fundamental intrinsic warrant which was found in Christ’s redemption Fraser explained their relationship,

The Commands of God give Ground of this Confidence, because Commands do indeed warrant the Acts of the Will, but they are not the proper, formal or intrinsical Warrant or Reason why the Understanding

⁶⁶ *JF*, 2.

⁶⁷ *JFSF*, 59.

⁶⁸ *JFSF*, 139.

acteth toward any Object; the elicit Acts of the Understanding such as Believing flow from the Evidence that is in the Object.⁶⁹

Fraser maintained, “The naked Sufficiency of Christ, or his absolute Power to save whom he will, is not the sole and compleat adequate Ground of Faith which the Lord requires and warrants in the Gospel.”⁷⁰ Instead Christ’s satisfaction should be the fundamental object in which a sinner trusted thereby becoming the primary foundation for warranting justifying faith.⁷¹

Claiming the naked sufficiency of Christ was not enough to warrant true faith was not a popular stance among Fraser’s contemporaries. Many particularists argued God’s command to believe in Christ for salvation was the only warrant necessary for belief.⁷² God commanded it, and that was the end of any discussion. Others agreed with Fraser that faith must personalize Christ’s redemption, but because of the limited scope of Christ’s redemption, being only for the elect, they accepted God commanded some people to believe the lie that Christ died ‘for me,’ when it was only true for the elect.⁷³ Fraser refused both options, asserting the, “Faith that justifies us hath Christ's Satisfaction to divine Justice as the formal Reason and Foundation thereof.”⁷⁴ Other options steered sinners towards a presumptuous faith, which could never establish a strong foundation for assurance.⁷⁵

Instituting such a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic warrants and subsequently suggesting a hierarchy between the commands to believe and the redemption of Christ were done to protect the notion of the ‘fullness’ of justifying faith. Fraser developed his doctrine of faith to ensure belief actually brought

⁶⁹ *JF*, 200. The “elicit Acts of the Understanding” refer to those things which induce the act of believing and draw a sinner to Christ as the object of his faith.

⁷⁰ *JF*, 12. Christ’s universal redemption not only warranted belief but also rendered those who rejected the gospel inexcusable. See, 133.

⁷¹ Universal redemption provided a material and substantial deposit to the promises of God. This intrinsic quality relates to Christ’s redemption through the volitive Acts of God and the virtual will of God, according to Fraser. See, Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.5 of this thesis.

⁷² Goodwin, *Justifying Faith*, 244 and *PRRD*, III.458.

⁷³ Fraser dismissed the claim he thought was made by men such as Piscator, Twiss, and Maccious that the gospel offer might lead individuals to believe a lie. Those theologians promoted a strict doctrine of the limitation of the benefits of Christ’s redemption to the elect, whilst maintaining sinners might be called to believe that Christ died ‘for me.’ See, *JFSF*, 98.

⁷⁴ *JF*, 133.

⁷⁵ *Meditations*, 5.

something along with it. Only Christ could bear the weight of the law and enable a sinner to declare, “I can be absolved.”⁷⁶

Fraser’s Christocentricity was undeniable. Christ was the substance to which faith clung and the foundation upon which faith rested. Hence, the emphasis Fraser placed on Christ’s redemptive work to save at times overshadowed the more subjective aspects of his doctrine of faith.⁷⁷

8.8: The Nature of Justifying Faith, Loving Christ as My Redeemer

Despite the eclipsing effect of Fraser’s emphasis on Christ’s work, his writings reveal the subjective elements were clearly present and extremely important within the framework of his doctrine of justification. The significance of an individual’s participation in his own justification can easily be deduced from the emphasis Fraser placed on the particular and personal character of justifying faith. He acknowledged “as to the first Reception of Grace, we be passive, yet when stirred up to believe, we actively believe, *acti agimus*.”⁷⁸ His Christocentricity did not exclude the individual’s participation in justification seeking instead to establish the foundation upon which an individual could form a true, active, and strong faith. An analysis of the nature of justifying faith will pay particular attention to Fraser’s notion of *acti agimus*.

The starting point in Fraser’s teaching on the nature of justifying faith, was its supernatural origin.⁷⁹ Fraser upheld the orthodox Reformed position that justifying faith was wholly a gift of God and not in any part generated by the efforts of the individual seeking to be justified.⁸⁰ He explained, “Faith is said to be from God in a particular Manner, because wrought in a supernatural Way in the Soul, to which it hath no natural Disposition.”⁸¹ Fraser’s belief in the supernatural character of faith

⁷⁶ *JFSF*, 139.

⁷⁷ Fraser intentionally minimized the sinner’s contribution in justification in response to what he deemed Baxter’s extremely inflated view of a sinner’s efforts to justify himself.

⁷⁸ *JFSF*, 242.

⁷⁹ According to Fraser, faith extended from the predestining purposes of God. He wrote, “no Man can actually will, but as he is predetermined by the divine Concourse and Providence.” See, *JFSF*, 238.

⁸⁰ Fraser related Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism to the notion that man possessed the innate ability to do good and to choose Christ. Therefore, faith was an extension of the individual, not purely a gift of God. See, *JF*, 83.

⁸¹ *JFSF*, 237.

can also be seen in his views on original sin. In man's natural state, "He hath no congruous Dispositions nor is so shaped for Influences to believe."⁸² Humanity's innate depravity eliminated the possibility of faith having its origin from within the subject.

Given the inability of a sinner to engender true faith, Fraser directed attention to the Holy Spirit as the person who draws to Christ.⁸³ The Spirit's task was a work of recreation and regeneration, because the human heart was naturally averse to the things of God, even to promises of salvation and blessing. Concerning the Spirit's work, Fraser commented, "This special Faith of God's Elect, and wrought by the special Power of God, proceeding from him carries the Soul, in whom is wrought, to God; what is of him is to him."⁸⁴ Fraser clarified, however, that the individual believer's faith was not grounded in the inward testimony of the Spirit. He stated that the secret revelation of the Spirit and the assurance of the Spirit's work in the heart of the believer are "neither the formal or material Object of Faith."⁸⁵ It is the work of the Holy Spirit to draw sinners to Christ. Fraser maintained that the Holy Spirit miraculously conveyed the general promises of salvation to the elect in such a way that these promises were applied particularly.⁸⁶ It is one of the conclusions of this thesis that Fraser failed to consider the broader implications of the Holy Spirit's work in the process of particularization. If the Holy Spirit could take the general promises found in the gospel and apply them to the individual, then it seems logical that the Holy Spirit could have just as easily used the commands of God and the sufficiency of Christ as Redeemer to produce a personal faith. One is left asking whether Fraser's desire to communicate the details of the universality of Christ's redemption was truly necessary.

Fraser taught the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration was not necessarily an instantaneous act. Drawing understanding from Thomas Shepherd's *Sound Believer*, Fraser asserted the Holy Spirit often softened the hearts of sinners through a

⁸² *JFSF*, 238.

⁸³ *JFSF*, 221.

⁸⁴ *JFSF*, 272.

⁸⁵ *JFSF*, 132.

⁸⁶ *JFSF*, 71.

progressive work of preparation.⁸⁷ Having detailed seven different aspects of the Spirit's work of preparation in the soul of the believer, he emphasized the principal acts of the Spirit's labors was to humble the individual by revealing the depth of his depravity and the grandeur of God's glory.⁸⁸ Fraser contrasted the humiliation that leads to faith with the humiliation that accompanies faith, "The humiliation that precedes faith is induced from an immediate act of the Spirit on the soul, the habit of humiliation or the humility of the believer proceeds from the Spirit of Christ united to the Soul of Man."⁸⁹ When examining Fraser's statements regarding preparation for justification, it is essential to note this preparation was a process through which the Spirit took the elect individual to induce the person to embrace truly the promises of God.

The Holy Spirit ensured an individual's faith was genuine. Authentic justifying faith included both an accurate understanding of Christ and his benefits as the Redeemer and a willingness to embrace Christ as he was offered in the gospel. Fraser explained his two-fold view of faith,

To speak properly, the immediate, adequate, essential, and first Subject of Faith, is the Understanding, of Faith as it is an Assent, which it imports *in recto*: It is secondarily in the Will; but primarily it is in the Understanding and not in the Will, either totally or partially, as its Subject.⁹⁰

Fraser defined 'understanding' as the sinner's particular knowledge of Christ as his Redeemer. He maintained this understanding would inform the 'will' to act by believing. Fraser's view of the understanding as the principal subject of faith was not a belief which he dogmatically imposed on others since he recognized other orthodox theologians gave precedence to the will as the immediate subject of faith. He also readily admitted that "without the Will Faith would never be applied particularly," a

⁸⁷ *JFSF*, 196. Shepherd contended that "the soul of a humbled sinner is the subject of faith." See, Shepherd, *The Sound Believer*, 199.

⁸⁸ *JFSF*, 243-254.

⁸⁹ *JFSF*, 204.

⁹⁰ *JFSF*, 174. "If the Will were the partial or only Subject of Faith, then Faith would be either Consent, Love, Choice, or Desire." See, 176.

concept which has been demonstrated to be key to Fraser's doctrine of justifying faith.⁹¹

The primacy of the understanding and assent in Fraser's doctrine of justifying faith functioned as a guard against the errors of Arminianism and Baxterianism, not as an attempt to eliminate the need for the will. He was concerned if he stressed the will or subjective participation of the individual as the chief act of faith, he would concede ground to Baxter. Fraser admitted pressure, "That which presses me most to affirm Faith to be in the Understanding, is that hereby we are less liable to run to a Covenant of Works."⁹² As a consequence, he frequently spoke of faith simply in terms of assent.⁹³

At the most basic level, assent was the physical or material act of believing.⁹⁴ Fraser taught faith had more substance than a 'naked' assent and argued justifying faith consisted of a 'full' assent, claiming, "Faith must not only believe it [the Gospel] by a naked Assent, but believe it particularly by Application of his Merits to themselves."⁹⁵ Full assent meant an active assent with believing including the possession of faith's object. Faith involved "the Taking and receiving the Waters of Life, not our Willingness to receive them."⁹⁶ Fraser rejected the notion that faith was an ethereal abstraction and spoke of faith in terms of a practical assent.⁹⁷

Fraser's definition of faith followed from his assumption, the act of believing was governed by the manner of believing. Fraser argued the manner of belief actually determined whether or not an individual's faith was truly justifying faith or merely a deception. Fraser explained, "the difference arises from the Form thereof, of the Manner of the Assent as it terminates itself at the Object," not merely in the physical act of belief.⁹⁸ To illustrate his point, Fraser explained even the devil assented to the truths of the gospel. At the other end of the spectrum, only the saints

⁹¹ *JFSF*, 170.

⁹² *JFSF*, 179.

⁹³ See, Section 4.6.2 of this thesis.

⁹⁴ *JFSF*, 21.

⁹⁵ *JFSF*, 131 and 147.

⁹⁶ *JFSF*, 177.

⁹⁷ Fraser remarked, "The Believer doth not by a naked Assent, receive the Promises of the Gospel; but by a practical Assent he receives it." *JFSF*, 147.

⁹⁸ *JFSF*, 22.

receive the full benefits of God's promises because they have personally applied these truths to their lives through full assent.

Full assent included both the presence of knowledge and the proper manner of believing,

The Understanding sees and commends the Things offered as excellent, sees its Title to these Things; and hence lays hold on the Word of Promise, applying this to it self, which apprehended as its own, the rest of the Affections feed thereupon, received and applied by Faith, and rest thereon; from which proceeds Strength, Life, and Consolation.⁹⁹

Fraser's description of the processes of belief and the event of justification related to his pastoral focus. For an individual sinner to be convinced of God's forgiveness and acceptance, that person needed to comprehend the sufficiency of the object offered and apply the benefits of the object personally and passionately. He successfully summarized, "The Soul applies its own Salvation in believing by Affection."¹⁰⁰

The terms affectionate assent, practical assent, and full assent were be used interchangeably by Fraser, and he employed the analogy of marriage to illustrate the function of the affections in defining justifying faith. He wrote, "Faith is a marrying of Christ; and no honest Marriage is made without the Heart and Affections."¹⁰¹ Fraser maintained believing and love were distinct responses whilst affirming love always accompanied true faith.

Fraser's desire to integrate the affections into justifying faith stemmed from his pastoral emphasis. Writing to those within the persecuted church in Scotland, Fraser drew upon the emotional aspect of their theological struggles and directed their affections to Christ. He stated, "This cordial believing is all one with a lively Faith." He continued, "If thy Faith be not Lively...it will not operate, it cannot be fruitful, it profiteth not."¹⁰²

⁹⁹ *JFSF*, 170.

¹⁰⁰ *JFSF*, 78.

¹⁰¹ *JFSF*, 169.

¹⁰² *JFSF*, 25. Compare Preston, who similarly argued the love of Christ accompanied all truly saving faith. See, Preston, J., *A Heavenly Treatise on the Divine Love of Christ* (London: Thomas Paine, 1640), 77-79.

Fraser was convinced if the heart were not warmed with affection for Christ, lasting assurance would be lost, if assurance were forfeited, fruitful living was impossible. One of the principal emphases in developing growing in faith was the need to recognize Christ as the soul's greatest prize and God's greatest gift.¹⁰³ Salvation or eternal life came second because true justifying faith looked to Christ as the reward, not simply as a means to the reward. Fraser passionately declared, "Faith comes to get the Lord Jesus himself, it wants Christ."¹⁰⁴ Jesus was a believer's happiness and the consolation for his soul.¹⁰⁵ The reciprocal relationship between faith and love in Fraser's doctrine of justifying faith was expressed in the following process, the expectation of the fulfillment of God's promises and the assurance conveyed to the believer elicited an affectionate response, and the love of Christ in turn brought the believer closer to Christ, providing encouragement and power to live a profitable Christian life. Fraser also maintained justifying faith was a "lively operative faith," meaning believing presupposed a determination to act in accordance with that belief¹⁰⁶ Fraser explained, "The End of Faith must be considered; it is not a naked Belief of Christ and his Promises, but it is a practical Belief."¹⁰⁷

The practicality or liveliness of justifying faith served to refute an Antinomian interpretation of justification. Fraser sought to demonstrate to Baxter assent did not necessary imply the deterministic framework of Antinomianism nor lead to utter passivity.¹⁰⁸ A lively faith, according to Fraser, involved a closing with and acceptance of, not only God's "Promise of Mercy and Salvation [justification]" but also with "the Promises of Sanctification."¹⁰⁹ Justification and sanctification were inextricably linked, not, as Baxter contended, because justification depended on sanctification or sincere obedience, but because faith undergirds the entire process of sanctification. To believe in Christ carried with it a desire to be like Christ. Likewise, to be regenerated by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit and receive the gift of faith

¹⁰³ *JFSF*, 137.

¹⁰⁴ *JFSF*, 278.

¹⁰⁵ *JFSF*, 136.

¹⁰⁶ *JFSF*, 17.

¹⁰⁷ *JF*, 314.

¹⁰⁸ Fraser declared the error of Antinomianism was that it made, "The Foundation of Comfort and Believing is without a Man altogether." See, *JFSF*, 88.

¹⁰⁹ *JF*, 17.

entailed the continual indwelling of the Spirit leading to greater holiness and a renewing of the image of Christ in the believer.

Fraser asserted if Baxter had held a more biblical definition of faith, he could have rebutted the Antinomians without undermining the efficacy of Christ's redemption and the completeness of Christ's righteousness in justification. By underestimating the liveliness of faith, Baxter recategorized justification as an incomplete process and redefined faith and sincere obedience as moral conditions required by Christ's new law. Such a devaluing of faith had devastating and, as far as Fraser was concerned, eternal consequences.

8.9: Conclusion

Fraser's principal intention in writing on the nature, object and grounds of justifying faith was to build assurance through encouraging believers to look away from themselves and look towards Christ. He wished to undermine Baxter's influence on the churches in Scotland because the new legalism suggested by Baxterianism was dangerously subject-oriented, causing individuals to take their gaze from Jesus Christ and trust their own ability to fulfill the law's demand for righteousness. Fraser categorized this as exchanging the gospel of grace for a gospel of self-righteousness.

To achieve this end, Fraser deviated from the traditional particularists' response to Baxterianism by developing his doctrine of universal redemption. He reasoned that broadening the scope of Christ's redemption was the only way to remove all stumbling blocks and eliminate the possibility of doubt. Christ's redemption signified to all sinners God was not making an empty promise in the gospel.

Fraser went to inordinate lengths to describe the warrant of belief to assure sinners that if they trusted Christ, his promise of salvation would surely be fulfilled. He affirmed believing was a rational exercise; consequently, the mind of the sinner needed to be presented with enough information about Christ to persuade him to trust Christ for his salvation. Fraser was convinced the universality of Christ's redemption supplied all a conscience might demand.

Fraser defined the nature of faith in such a way that faith's goal was to particularize and personalize the promises of God. In his effort to detail meticulously the nature of faith's work, Fraser formulated an extremely rigid and narrow concept of justifying faith. Consequently, the precision with which he systematically defined

what it meant to personalize the promises of God served to weaken his ability to achieve his goals of making justification Christocentric and engendering assurance.

The inflexibility of Fraser's notion of a particularized faith resulted in a theory that so belabored the individual's need to understand the particularities of God's promises prior to believing, he was in danger of creating a doctrine of justification by knowledge. He risked replacing Christ as the object of faith with a perfect understanding of Christ's work as the object of faith. This produced an unconscious step towards Baxter's subjectivism.

Fraser's excessively differentiated categories of faith and his teaching regarding how faith apprehends Christ could have produced uncertainty. This is ironic, considering Fraser's chief aim was to comfort believers, including himself, and give assurance. The following example illustrates the point: if a person agreed with Fraser's doctrine of justification, he would accept that Christ was a sufficient Redeemer universally given. He would be left questioning whether or not his understanding of Christ was particular enough to substantiate his treating this understanding as a true and justifying faith. In response to Baxter, Fraser presented the possibility a person might believe without having a proper understanding of the object of faith, and so be condemned because he had trusted in the wrong object. Fraser unwittingly forced his readers to look inward to determine whether or not Christ had been rightly understood and whether faith's object had been personalized to the extent his system demanded.

Such a move away from his Christocentric focus could have been avoided, with the result that Fraser would not have conceded ground to Baxterian subjectivism. However, Fraser failed consistently to apply his argument for the divine origin of faith. Faith, Fraser acknowledged, was God's instrument, used by God's design, for God's end, namely the salvation of His people. The divine origin of faith should have induced confidence God would ensure faith would find and grasp its object and serve as an adequate foundation upon which to build the assurance Fraser so greatly desired to communicate.

Despite the shortcomings and inconsistencies in his logic, Fraser's arguments regarding the warrant, object, and nature of justifying faith represent an attempt to reposition the doctrine of faith around the person and work of Christ. The determination to remain Christocentric in all facets of his doctrine of redemption permits a connection to be made between Fraser's more controversial statements

regarding the extent of Christ's redemption and his doctrine of justifying faith, a connection overlooked by Fraser's previous interpreters. The subjective and personal aspects of justification were contextualized by God's overarching plan to save the elect, a plan spanning eternity.¹¹⁰

Fraser's arguments concerning justifying faith focused on the efficacy of Christ's redemptive work. Consequently, his statements about the role and necessity of justifying faith concentrated upon the means by which God accomplishes his sovereign and eternal plans. This emphasis underscores Fraser's rejection of conditionality in faith or in the purposes of God. Though defending the doctrine of universal redemption, Fraser remained an absolutist and particularist, and the Christocentricity of his doctrine of justifying faith confirms this. Christ alone was the true warrant of faith. Christ alone was the object to which faith must cling if salvation and righteousness were to be granted. Christ was the giver of faith so the believer will assent with a full and hearty assent to the promise of Christ in the gospel.

¹¹⁰ A fundamental distinction between absolutists and hypothetical universalists was that absolutists regard God's purposes for salvation in terms of a continuum. Hypothetical universalists dichotomize the purposes of God to save sinners by contrasting the motives of Christ with the intentions of the Father and the Son in only granting faith to the elect. Christ, according to hypothetical universalists, came to redeem every person that he might be saved. The Father and the Spirit, however, subsequently limited the number who actually would be saved.

CHAPTER IX: CONCLUSION

This thesis has presented a reassessment of Fraser's doctrine of universal redemption. Such a re-evaluation was necessary because of previous over-simplified assessments. They failed to reconcile the discrepancies between what Fraser professed to believe and their own conclusions, and overlooked precisely how the universal extent of Christ's redemption functioned within his system or how his unique views related to other 17th century theological movements. An interpretation of Fraser's views has been compiled by considering his motivation for deviating from the traditional particularist's presentation of Christ's redemption, his double design of redemption which fitted into his other doctrinal commitments, and his loyalty to the concept of universality related to the fundamentals of Reformed orthodoxy.

The re-evaluation has recovered Fraser's unique perspective on Christ's redemption and permitted an assessment of those elements which were fundamental to post-Reformation orthodoxy. It has been argued that God's predestining decree formed the framework for understanding the purpose and efficacy of Christ's work of redemption, and allowed an orthodox doctrine of redemption to be constructed. Fraser's commitment to the primacy of God's predestining decree has been undervalued by both pro-Westminsterian and anti-Westminsterian modern scholars and resulted in greater confusion in categorizing his doctrine of redemption. His views on the nature and order of God's decrees created a bridge between his universal particularism and traditional 17th century particularism. Despite the variances in expression, it has been argued Fraser's doctrine of redemption was a nuanced version of an already well-established and orthodox particularism.

The doctrines of assurance, the eternal decrees, federal theology, and justifying faith offer an interpretative grid for Fraser's doctrine of redemption. By adopting a doctrine-by-doctrine approach, Fraser's motivation for expounding his

distinctive doctrine of redemption and the means he employed have been revealed including his criticisms of other doctrines of redemption and his solutions.

Contextualizing factors influencing Fraser and his interpreters have been important in reaching a new interpretation. Firstly, Fraser's writings were deeply personal in addition to being theological, developing because he needed to satisfy his own conscience.¹ Secondly, he wrote with a strong polemical edge against those he regarded as dangerous to the doctrinal purity of the church, especially those he called 'legalists.' Finally Fraser's works were posthumously published when his doctrinal variances were condemned as heresy.

The broader theological context necessitated a review of those theologians who directly influenced Fraser's thought or who played a key role in the doctrine of redemption's development prior to Fraser. Since the scope of Christ's redemption was one factor within a complex doctrinal matrix, modern scholars should abandon their single-criterion method of interpretation. The parameters of the modern debate should be broadened beyond a discussion of the extent of Christ's redemption. Without such breadth, an accurate picture of the theological landscape against which theologians can be judged cannot be established.

The struggle to discover more substantial grounds for personal assurance was shown to be the driving force behind Fraser's universalism. Having been raised on a diet of Calvinistic particularism, he was determined to find a doctrine to ease his conscience. Whilst he did not wish to break with the Westminster tradition, some change was unavoidable. Consequently, he held to the essence of particularism, at the same time as broadening the scope of Christ's redemption to everyone. He was convinced his two-fold, absolute doctrine of universal redemption supplied the necessary underpinning to ensure confidence in the gospel promises.

As explained in Chapter V, Fraser was in large part blinded by his optimism and failed to account for the weakness of his new perspective on redemption. By introducing a universal component into Christ's absolute redemption, he did not actually resolve the existential conflict most doubters have with particularism. He merely changed the doubter's question from "Did Jesus die for me?" to "For what reason did Jesus die for me?" Furthermore, by broadening the extent of Christ's

¹ See, Section 4.2 of this thesis.

redemption, Fraser surrendered the strength of particularism. He undermined the doubters' confidence in the absolute efficacy of Christ's redemption for salvation by incorporating God's purposes for the reprobate into Christ's redemption. Therefore, it is the judgment of his thesis that Fraser failed to produce a doctrine of redemption which would help to solve the problems of conscience he set out to address.

Since the logical starting point for Fraser's doctrine of redemption was God's decree his *via media alia* did not undermine his commitment to the absolute, sovereign and efficacious will of God to secure salvation and all the necessary conditions to apply salvation. This was precisely what differentiated his middle way from that of Amyraldianism and Baxterianism. His stand on God's decree also maintained a greater congruence with traditional particularism.

As one thoroughly committed to the covenantal paradigm of federal theology, Fraser utilized the covenant of grace as the vehicle through which Christ's redemption was communicated to sinners, both elect and reprobate. This double dimension to the covenant of grace linked the predestined purposes of God with Christ's provision of a universal right to receive the benefits of his redemption. Christ covenanted for both the salvation of the elect and the greater wrath of the reprobate. Fraser's concept of conditionality in the covenant has been compared and contrasted with Baxter's conditional covenant of grace, showing Fraser adhered closely to the definition of condition supplied by his Westminsterian contemporaries. His faithfulness to Reformed orthodoxy went hand in hand with his passionate objection to Baxter's theory, which Fraser regarded as a new, glorified covenant of works.

The analysis of Fraser's position regarding the object, warrant, and nature of justifying faith revealed further difference from Baxter. He rejected Baxter's single imputation theory of justification considering double imputation vital for establishing both the object and warrant of justifying faith. Christ's provision needed to be complete because only then could a sinner discern faith's object and believe with confidence. Fraser emphasized faith's role in bridging the gap between the general promises of the gospel and the particularized application of those promises. However, he badly overestimated the contribution his doctrine of redemption made in this respect.

One of the most significant findings of the analysis of Fraser's theology has been the importance of differentiating between Fraser's *via media* and those *viae*

media proposed by hypothetical universalists. The key contrast lay between whether Christ supplied a conditional or an absolute provision. By fixing upon an absolute provision, Fraser's *via media alia* did not represent a middle way between Calvinistic particularism and Arminianism but rather, between traditional particularism and a broader, two-fold form of particularism. Since this two-fold particularism was rooted in Fraser's understanding of the absolute purposes of God, it gave him a consistency that has previously been missed. God's decrees served as the anchor for Fraser's doctrine of redemption, and his understanding of the eternal purposes of God underpinned all of his other soteriological commitments.

His dependence on God's absolute decrees gave substance to Fraser's claim to adhere to the doctrinal system of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Despite the absence of an exhaustive or codified list of fundamentals, a commitment to the absolute nature of God's decrees was one of the fundamental elements of post-Reformation orthodoxy.² To the extent he was consistent in his adherence to the primacy of God's purposes, Fraser remained in fundamental agreement with the Westminster Standards, though this should not imply total agreement.³ Fraser was probably a bit optimistic regarding his adherence to the Westminster Standards; however, interpreters must take seriously his professed solidarity.

The re-evaluation of Fraser's doctrine of redemption has challenged some assumptions concerning the theological developments within the post-Reformation period. With respect to the doctrine of redemption as a whole, historians and theologians have frequently become fixated on the scope of Christ's redemption without asking more fundamental questions about how Christ's redemptive efforts were linked to the eternal purposes of God and how the benefits of Christ's

² Chapter V established that the absolute nature of God's decrees refers to the fact that: a) they are eternal and unchangeable; b) they are unilateral decisions made by God without reference to man's conditional response; c) they are free from contradiction; and d) they are efficacious, meaning that which God decrees He will necessarily bring to pass and provide all the necessary conditions to that end. See also, Sections 4.6.1 and 6.4 of this thesis.

³ Muller provides wise advice for historians and theologians as they look back on the controversial issues within the post-Reformation period. He explains, "The application of the term 'Christocentric' to the Reformation and the era of orthodoxy must not take on shades of the central dogma theory, as if a Christ-center in theology excludes the fundamental focus of Christian theology on God as Trinity or as if a Christ-center is incompatible with the presence of other theological *foci* that together with Christology determine the character of the system." See, Muller, *Calvin and the Calvinists*, 156-157. Fraser shared the conviction that Christ's redemption should not be isolated for the eternal purposes of the Father and the subsequent application of His work to the elect by the Spirit. According to Fraser, redemption was ultimately a Triune work.

redemption were applied to the redeemed. The effect of focusing exclusively on the scope of redemption has led to the use of unnatural or overly-restrictive categories. Fraser has erroneously been labeled an Arminian or an Amyraldian, and other theological moderates of the Reformation and post-Reformation periods have probably suffered similar fates.

One glaring example is John Davenant who has been assumed to support hypothetical universalism, yet in his objection to Baxter's notion of the conditional decrees, he asserted,

If anyone claims 'that the death of Christ, which is sufficient for all, becomes eventually efficacious to some from the contingent act of the human will, in the first place, he is refuted by the words themselves; since when it is said, *Christ died for such and such person effectually*, we denote a singular efficacy proceeding from the special will of him that died, not flowing from the contingent act of him that believes.'⁴

In this statement Davenant affirmed Christ's redemption was a means of efficaciously accomplishing the eternal purpose of God's predestining will, with the salvation of the elect neither being contingent on man's will to be saved nor upon a secondary decree of God to save. In this way, Davenant distinguished himself from Baxter and Amyraut by viewing Christ's redemption of the elect in absolute terms.

A similar case could be made for Ussher, Preston, and several other moderates present at the Westminster Assembly. Many supposed Amyraldians, like Fraser and Davenant, stood against the subordination of God's predestining decree, a teaching at the heart of hypothetical universalism. Reformed moderates who taught the universal extent of Christ's redemption did not automatically embrace the notion of conditionality. Further research is needed upon the moderate Westminster divines and those features connecting them with Fraser and with the particularists. Since not all universalism is Arminian, or Amyraldian, the parameters of the discussion of the doctrine of redemption and what constitutes Reformed orthodoxy need to be broadened.

From a general theological perspective, the doctrine of redemption has significance beyond 17th and 18th centuries controversies, because it is central to

⁴ *DDC*, 528.

soteriology. Salvation occurs through Christ's redemption and its application to the sinner, with Christ being the Mediator by whom salvation is communicated to an individual believer. How one interprets the doctrine of redemption has implications for every other soteriological category. When Christ's redemption is conceived as a hypothetical, salvation remains subject to a condition met either by an individual or by a secondary decree of God. The implications of holding to conditional redemption were demonstrated by the theories of Amyraut and Baxter. Both men incorporated a temporal progression into God's decrees, ensuring Christ's efforts to save the world were undercut by the Father's and the Holy Spirit's limited election. This introduced the need for a secondary act of God to ensure the elect's salvation and placed the universal goals of the Son in opposition to the limited goals of the Father and the Holy Spirit. When redemption is conceived as an absolute provision, all the conditions for salvation are secured in Christ. Following Fraser and the particularists, the sending of the Son was in response to the Triune covenant to save the elect, ensuring Christ was commissioned to achieve a specific end based on the sovereign purposes of God.

The scope of Christ's redemption should not be regarded as an example of theological *adiaphora*. As Fraser's case demonstrated, it affected his understanding of faith, the covenant of grace and assurance. Despite the peculiarities of Fraser's two-fold scheme, it is possible to recognize an underlying agreement between Fraser and post-Reformation orthodoxy, resting upon the shared conviction Christ's redemption was the means of accomplishing God's absolute purposes.⁵

Fraser's doctrine of redemption has significance within the current debate concerning the relationship between Calvin and 17th century Calvinists. In the first place, historians and theologians on both sides of the debate tend to 'proof text' Calvin into either the particularist or hypothetical universalist category. Though neither side would concede to the other, Fraser's universal particularism offers an alternative to restricting Calvin to these two options. If Calvin held a form of universal redemption, it does not have to follow that he was a hypothetical

⁵ Torrance represents Fraser's federalism as an element of the inconsistency of Fraser's Christocentric doctrine of redemption. See, *ST*, 182. This thesis has argued against Torrance's conclusion by arguing that Fraser's federalism was consistent in all respects with his understanding of God's predestined purposes in Christ's redemption. Even Bell, who generally agrees with Torrance's interpretation of Fraser, acknowledges that Fraser's federalism was a logical consequence of his commitment to double predestination. See, *Assurance*, 138.

universalist. Likewise, if Calvin was an absolutist, then it equally does not imply he found no place for the reprobate in Christ's redemption. Fraser's mixed category of redemption might help to illuminate these debates.

Secondly, in the debates over the nature of condition in securing salvation, anti-Calvinists charge Westminsterian federalism with formulating a doctrine of God's covenantal dealings which creates a new covenant of works. T.F. Torrance suggests Fraser is an example of a theologian caught in transition, trying to rearticulate a doctrine of the covenant without embracing the legalism plaguing his day.⁶ Torrance correctly pinpoints Fraser's goal of opposing legalism, whilst wrongly identifying Westminster as the culprit. Both Torrance and Faris wrongly associate Fraser's opposition to legalism with his opposition to Westminster federalism. However, it was Baxter whom Fraser denounced as a legalist and an enemy of the gospel, not Westminsterian particularism. Fraser was arguing against Baxter's neonomianism and not against Westminsterian particularism. Fraser's teaching on the covenant of grace prompts a reconsideration of the definition of legalism and of the nature of covenant 'conditions.'

The fundamentals of post-Reformation orthodoxy need to be clarified and its theologians freed from the caricatures that have been created. The complexity of the doctrine of redemption means a single criterion cannot be a sufficient measure for defining Reformed orthodoxy. Evaluating the legacy of Calvin in the Reformed church and to elucidate the fundamentals of Reformed orthodoxy requires a multi-faceted approach.

⁶ See, *ST*, 182. D.L.

APPENDIX

JAMES FRASER OF BREA (1639-1699) AND JOHN McLEOD CAMPBELL (1800-1872): A BRIEF COMPARISON OF THEIR DOCTRINES OF UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION

There is a common assumption that James Fraser of Brea and John McLeod Campbell held complementary perspectives on Christ's redemption.¹ This belief is held in spite of the fact that McLeod Campbell makes no direct mention of Fraser's influence on his theory of redemption.² Scholars familiar with the developments in the doctrine of redemption within the Reformed church in Scotland rightly point out that both men argued for the universal extent of Christ's redemption as a means of demonstrating the warrant for greater assurance and of defending the church against the growing threat of legalistic preaching. However, this brief comparison of Fraser's and McLeod Campbell's doctrines of redemption will reveal that along with apparent similarities and stated goals, there remain many fundamental discrepancies, which call into question the compatibility of these theologians' perspectives.

It is granted that the motivation behind Fraser's and McLeod Campbell's attempts to redefine the nature and parameters of Christ's redemption was aimed at providing a firmer foundation for assurance.³ The universality of Christ's redemption supported their desire to align more closely the nature of assurance and the direct act of faith by eliminating uncertainty introduced by limiting Christ's redemption to the elect. Fraser urged his readers to doubt no more and to look to Christ's universal sufficiency as assurance of God's desire and determination to save them from their

¹ Duncan Fraser includes McLeod Campbell as one of the inheritors of Fraser's legacy in the session churches. See, *JFB*, xi. McLeod Campbell's friend and fellow theologian, Thomas Erskine, identified Fraser as an influence on his thoughts on Christ's redemption. See, Needham, *Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, 215-216 and *ST*, footnote 12, 290.

² Faris explains, "It is difficult to say how much he [Fraser] influenced McLeod Campbell but it is certain that McLeod Campbell knew of his work." Faris, "The Nature of Theological Inquiry," 279.

³ Van Dyk explains, "Campbell's atonement theory was motivated by the experiences of his pastoral ministry with a congregation who found it difficult to have a confident assurance of their faith." Van Dyk, L., *The Desire of Divine Love: John McLeod Campbell's Doctrine of the Atonement* W.L. Fox. Studies in Church History (4) (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1995), 39. See also, *ST*, 290.

sins.⁴ He reasoned that if a sinner were convinced of the reliability and accessibility of Christ's redemption, all room for doubting would be removed and faith and assurance would follow.⁵ McLeod Campbell agreed. When explaining the correlation between faith and assurance, McLeod Campbell directed his readers to the book of Hebrews, in which sinners are commanded to "draw near in the full assurance of faith." Such an assured faith was possible based on the fact that Christ's redemption secured for all humanity "the opening of a way in which we as rebellious children can return to the bosom of the Father's love."⁶

The assurance which accompanied justifying faith, Fraser and McLeod Campbell argued, was a logical consequence of the fact that Christ's redemption supplied something more substantial to believe on than merely a naked promise or an unrevealed eternal decree.⁷ The object of faith was Christ himself. Nothing less would provide lasting assurance. According to Fraser and McLeod Campbell, redemption was not merely a work which Christ performed, which could be abstracted from the person of Christ. Redemption was principally the offering of a person, and therefore, faith must be grounded in Christ alone. Faith closed with Christ immediately. Both men downplayed role of the gospel imperative and excluded altogether the knowledge of God's secret decree as the object of justifying faith. Christ as the object of faith, and as such, sinners would be less likely to base their assurance on the strength of their faith or the fruits of their faith, which both Fraser and McLeod Campbell determined were less reliable grounds of assurance.

Fraser explained that faith translated the general gospel promises into an individual's testimony.⁸ The gospel proclaims Christ is 'for you,' and the sinner must

⁴ *JF*, 16.

⁵ Fraser stated, "Faith and Unbelief are contrary in their Abstract Natures: And therefore, as it is the Nature of Faith to believe confidently, and opposes doubting; so, whatever there is Faith, the Soul believes firmly with Confidence." *JFSF*, 60-61. See also, pages 118-121 of this thesis.

⁶ McLeod Campbell, J., *The Nature of the Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 148 and 151.

⁷ Fraser explained, "The Attributes of God, his Power, and Faith, Fulness and Wisdom are without a Doubt the remote Grounds of Believing; but the immediate Grounds of Believing are the gracious Promises in the Gospel: But my Belief of the Truth of the Promises is founded on Christ's Faith, Fulness, the Bottom and Pillar of all Divine Faith." See, *JF*, 3.

⁸ Mair summarized Fraser's position, when he wrote, "The Foundation, Christ crucified, is thus laid before every Gospel Hearer,--the Gospel Revelation declares it to be intended as the Foundation for everyone's faith,--or appointed *as such*;--so that every one is warranted and encouraged immediately to bottom his Faith and Confidence of his own eternal Salvation--or of the special Mercy of God--upon this Foundation--or upon this Ransom, as the *Payment of his Debt*." *Case*, 40.

receive this good news heartily.⁹ True, assured faith, according to Fraser, adopts Christ's story of redemption as the sinner's own story.¹⁰ He believed this type of personalization and particularization guarded sinners from looking at their own abilities to satisfy the law's demands or from settling for an object of faith only remotely connected to Christ. It also kept people from speculating about and resting on the knowledge of God's secret decree. Fraser held unrelentingly to absolute predestination, but God's eternal decree played no part in the object of justifying faith. Faith closed with Christ, and it closed with Christ 'for me.'

McLeod Campbell affirmed along with Fraser that the only way lasting assurance would be achievable was to ensure sinners entrusted themselves to Christ personally. His rationale for particularization of Christ's redemption, however, differed greatly from that of Fraser's. To guarantee assurance would be wed to faith, McLeod Campbell not only broadened the parameters of Christ's redemption, he fundamentally altered the nature of redemption. He denied the orthodox, Reformed position that Christ's life, death and resurrection were God's means by which Christ satisfied the demands for righteousness. This perspective of redemption, according to McLeod Campbell, destroyed the grounds of assurance by replacing redemption as act of love with redemption as an act of justice. He believed conceiving of redemption as an act of satisfying divine justice necessarily obscuring redemption as an act of divine love. This redefinition of redemption undermined Fraser's understanding of Christ's mission and created a dichotomy between divine love and righteousness.

One of the effects of McLeod Campbell's pitting the satisfaction theory of Christ's redemption against his view of redemption as an act of divine love was that the acts which constituted redemption were reinterpreted. Given that 'atonement' and 'redemption' were often used as synonyms, when Reformed theologians, including Fraser, spoke of Christ's redemption, they focused upon the sacrificial death and victorious resurrection of Christ.¹¹ McLeod Campbell acknowledged the suffering

⁹ *JFSF*, 41.

¹⁰ Fraser wrote, "If there be any Ground for believing at all, there is Ground for Assurance; for where ever any Grace is commanded, the Strength of that Grace is commanded: Now, Assurance being the Strength of Faith, where ever we are commanded to believe, we are commanded to believe without doubting." *JFSF*, 64.

¹¹ See page 3 of this thesis.

and resurrection of Christ as an important expression of God's love, but the events surrounding the cross no longer functioned as the principal acts through which redemption was achieved.¹²

McLeod Campbell tended to emphasize the incarnation rather than the cross as the ultimate expression of Christ's redemption.¹³ Christ's becoming human, according to McLeod Campbell, epitomized the 'work' of redemption.¹⁴ Through this work of redemption, Christ provided a "filial righteousness" and a "moral and spiritual atonement."¹⁵ Christ's redemption, therefore, had nothing to do with satisfying divine law or with providing a legal righteousness. According to McLeod Campbell, it was the relational standing between Christ and God the Father, which needed to be conveyed to humanity. Through the incarnation, Christ's filial righteousness, which was the inward reality of his "perfect sonship," was supplied so that sinners could also be received as sons.¹⁶

The reorientation of his doctrine of redemption around Christ's incarnation paralleled McLeod Campbell's denial of a distinction between the secret and revealed will of God. He reasoned that if Christ were truly the Son of God, then the entirety of God's purposes for his redemption must be disclosed in the incarnation.¹⁷ Thus, he refused to distinguish between the elect and reprobate and believed predestination was a category created in conjunction with the satisfaction theory of redemption he rejected.¹⁸ McLeod Campbell's strong refutation of the validity of

¹² *MC*, 281.

¹³ *MC*, 83 "Divinity as a capacity for enduring infinite penal infliction, is an idea which is recognized as rightly offending. Divinity as giving infinite value to any measure of humiliation or suffering condescended to, is urged as what should recommend itself as a far more worthy conception."

¹⁴ *MC*, 101, 137, 211-212. McLeod Campbell remarked, in the suffering of the Son, "we can see how as *a revealing of the Father* this must take place in *power of the life of sonship*, that is to say, in the strength of the Son's conscious oneness of mind with the Father, in the strength of the life which is in the Father's favour." *MC*, 197.

¹⁵ *MC*, 139 and 284. See also, Tuttle, *So Rich a Soil*, 80.

¹⁶ *MC*, 79 and 102.

¹⁷ McLeod Campbell assumed, in opposition to Fraser and Reformed orthodoxy, that Jesus claimed to reveal everything there was to know about the Father and his purposes for redemption. He appealed to Scriptures like John 14:9, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." Furthermore, he argued, "The limitation of the atonement, renders the grace of God in the gift of Christ no longer a revelation of the name of God,--that He is love." *MC*, 79. McLeod Campbell assumed, in opposition to Fraser and Reformed orthodoxy, that Jesus claimed to reveal everything there was to know about the Father and his purposes for redemption.

¹⁸ *MC*, 74.

election and reprobation must be contrasted with Fraser's unwavering commitment to God's double decree as the hermeneutical lens through which to interpret God's two-fold purposes for Christ's redemption.

Fraser taught that God's predestining decree needed to be affirmed if a sinner was to discover lasting assurance. This was not, as this thesis has shown, because Fraser believed a sinner must gain access to the secret will of God prior to believing, which would ground assurance in a Gnostic perception of the eternal decree. The knowledge of God's election could only be known as a product of faith, and a person's reprobation, according to Fraser, must not be believed until he finds himself in hell, where there was no longer a chance for faith and repentance. Nevertheless, he was convinced the eternal decrees provided assurance that God's purposes for Christ's redemption were not conditional but absolute, and consequently, provided confidence to believing sinners when the temptation to doubt arose.

As a result of denying God's predestined purposes for Christ's redemption, McLeod Campbell renounced the absolute will of God. This meant Christ's redemption merely afforded a temporal pardon—a provisional confession.¹⁹ Torrance explains, "By 'universal atonement', however, McLeod Campbell meant that Christ died for all people, not that all people would actually be saved."²⁰ Rather than definitively saving some or all through his work of redemption, Christ, according to McLeod Campbell, sought to communicate the love of God for humanity. He was convinced the radical expression of God's love, seen in the incarnation, suffering and crucifixion of Christ, would persuade sinners to respond in faith. This concept of redemption appears to be little more than a new version of the moral influence theory or the Arminian idea that Christ's redemption only offered prevenient grace.

McLeod Campbell's concept of universal redemption demonstrates little compatibility with the two-fold, universal and absolute paradigm proposed by Fraser.

¹⁹ Quoting a sermon by McLeod Campbell, Goodloe demonstrates in his thesis that McLeod Campbell restricted the efficacy of Christ's redemption by limiting the duration of God's offered pardon. Goodloe, J. C., "John McLeod Campbell, The Atonement, and the Transformation of the Religious Consciousness" (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 87), 23 and 34. If a sinner did not take advantage of God's willingness to allow him to partake in the divine sonship of Christ, then reconciliation would never truly occur and the love of God, which is the essence of sonship, would never be infused into the heart of the sinner. See, Stevenson, P. K., *God in Our Nature: The Incarnational Theology of John McLeod Campbell* Studies in Evangelical History and Thought (Carlisle, Cumbria UK: Paternoster Press, 2004), 69-70.

²⁰ *ST*, 288.

Fraser was committed to the absolute efficacy Christ's redemption, which compelled him to exclude any form of conditionalism, whether based on the law, as with Baxter, or one grounded in God's universal love and Christ's sonship. In the end, McLeod Campbell, along with those Fraser strongly opposed, including Arminius, Baxter, and the hypothetical universalists, sacrificed the efficacy of Christ's redemption in order to ensure its universality. Fraser was unwilling to surrender his doctrine of redemption to these types of conditionalism. He believed they undermined a sinner's confidence and replaced Christ's work with a legalistic burden the sinner was unable to fulfill.

Both Fraser and McLeod Campbell wrote in response to the threat of what they termed 'legalism.'²¹ Torrance argues that despite the many years of ecclesiastical development separating these two theologians, the legalism to which both responded was one in the same.²² When examined, however, it is clear that Fraser and McLeod Campbell held to different definitions of legalism, which illustrates their significantly divergent understandings of the nature of Christ's redemption.

According to Fraser, the legalistic spirit that beset the church during his years of ministry was largely due to the impact of Baxter's neonomianism, which explicitly taught that Christ's redemption freed sinners from the old law only to impose upon them a new, evangelical law.²³ Fraser condemned Baxter's doctrine of redemption, claiming it undermined any hope for assurance by calling into question the sufficiency and purpose of Christ's satisfaction. According to Fraser, Baxter's new law perverted biblical federal theology, turned sinners back on themselves rather than pointing them to Christ's perfect satisfaction and created a demand for righteousness sinners were unable to achieve.

McLeod Campbell defined legalism very differently. He, unlike Fraser, was not concerned with defending the all-sufficiency of Christ's meritorious sacrifice in the face of those who wished to question the complete efficacy of Christ's redemption. As a matter of fact, he considered even the appeal to a penal satisfaction

²¹ *ST*, 292-293.

²² *MC*, 12.

²³ See pages 110-117 of this thesis.

paradigm of Christ's redemption to be an expression of legalism. McLeod Campbell explained:

My objection to the conception of rectoral or public justice, as that in which the necessity for the atonement has originated, is much more serious than its inadequacy to remove difficulties as to the universality of the atonement. My great objection is that, equally with the view for which it is offered as a substitute, it takes a limited, and – in respect of the important elements which it leaves out of account – an erroneous view of that which the atonement was intended to accomplish. If my readers have entered into my objections to the mere legal character of the atonement, as we see in the system of the elder Calvinists, they will see that in respect to these objections, the modified Calvinism has no advantage.²⁴

According to McLeod Campbell, both strict particularism and hypothetical universalism were legalistic doctrines of Christ's redemption because they evaluated a sinner's standing before God in relation to divine law.

McLeod Campbell maintained love excluded the law.²⁵ Christ did not have to become sinful humanity's vicarious, penal substitute, only its "vicarious confessor."²⁶ It was repentance which was needed, not satisfaction. Contrasting his notion of a "moral atonement" with the orthodox Reformed position of redemption based on penal substitution, he declared:

This adequate sorrow for the sin of man, and adequate confession of its evil implies no fiction—no imputation to the suffer [sic] of the guilt of the sin for which He suffers; but only that He has taken the nature,

²⁴ *MC*, 90.

²⁵ Not redemption in terms of Christ satisfying the demands of "the rectitude of the moral Governor of the universe merely" -- "The hear of the Eternal Father,--connecting itself naturally with our justification, adoption, and sanctification, and all that pertains to our participation in the eternal life which is the gift of the Father in the Son." *MC*, 113.

²⁶ *ST*, 299, 305 and 308. J.B. Torrance refers to McLeod Campbell's understanding of the relationship between Christ's incarnation and his role as Redeemer as the "*Vicarious Humanity of Jesus Christ*, in whom and through whom we come to know the Father and who is our name on our behalf, in leading us to the Father, made the One True Response to the Father in his whole life or filial obedience as well as in his suffering and death upon the Cross." *MC*, 11.

and become the brother of those whose sin He confesses before the Father.²⁷

Sin, according to McLeod Campbell created a relational separation between God and humanity, not a legal one. The incarnation re-established God's relationship with sin-plagued humanity and provided a filial righteousness.²⁸ He argued filial righteousness engendered greater assurance than the notion of Christ's forensic righteousness, which he considered to be nothing more than a redemptive scheme based on a "legal fiction."²⁹

The fact that Fraser constructed his entire two-fold system of Christ's redemption around what McLeod Campbell deemed to be a legal fiction further highlights the incapability of these theologians' perspectives. According to Fraser, it was only upon the basis of the complete and meritorious righteousness of Christ that a doubting sinner could ever hope to discover abiding assurance. He challenged his readers to take hold of their right to "plead" Christ's merited righteousness before God their judge.³⁰ McLeod Campbell, on the other hand, was not concerned with persuading his readers of their rights to "plead" with God based upon a legal standing, and he certainly did not believe it could be the foundation upon which assurance could be laid.³¹ He denounced the concept that Christ must merit the ability for God to forgive or to love sinners. Consequently, Fraser's understanding of Christ's redemption was no better than strict particularism or hypothetical

²⁷ *MC*, 124.

²⁸ *MC*, 95.

²⁹ *MC*, 88 and 97. See also, *ST*, 303-304.

³⁰ *JFSF*, 82 and 113.

³¹ McLeod Campbell affirmed that Christ fully met all the requirements to deliver humanity from their transgressions but denied that this redemption was aimed at satisfaction of the law. He explained, "I believe that no modification of the law *as a law*, in accommodation to man's condition as a sinner, is conceivable that could either give the assurance of the pardon of sin, or quicken us with a new life; and that all idea of bridging over, by a modified law, the gulf which we have been contemplating is untenable. I believe that, if this was to be accomplished, it could only be by some moral and spiritual constitution quite other than the law." *MC*, 51.

universalism at encouraging assurance and deterring legalism.³² According to McLeod Campbell, Fraser was in fact among the ‘legalists’ whom he opposed.³³

In conclusion, this brief comparison and examination of the similarities and discontinuities between Fraser’s and McLeod Campbell’s theories of redemption reveals that they formulated essentially different interpretations of God’s purposes, Christ’s actions and the benefits supplied to the recipients of Christ’s redemption. According to Fraser’s understanding of redemption, McLeod Campbell underestimated the barrier sin erected between God and humanity. McLeod Campbell pit love against law, the relational against the penal. Fraser, however, believed Christ’s love was made manifest through his complete satisfaction of God’s holy standard. He argued the love became real to a sinner when he could see the power of sin broken, sin which caused his alienation in the first place.

This brief comparison has shown Fraser and McLeod Campbell approached the doctrine of redemption in fundamentally contradictory ways. According to McLeod Campbell, Fraser’s doctrine of redemption promulgated a legalism which made God’s love unintelligible and undermined any prospect for assurance. On the other hand, when evaluating McLeod Campbell’s doctrine of redemption in light of Fraser’s foremost concerns, McLeod Campbell offered little more than a conditional redemption and a prevenient grace. These, according to Fraser, destroyed all confidence in Christ’s redemption and left doubting sinners with the yoke of meriting God’s favor by their own insufficient efforts. Despite their shared concerns about legalistic teaching, their hopes for fostering greater assurance among the doubting in their congregations and their commitment to universal redemption, there was little consensus between the two theologians.

³² He declared strict Calvinism and modified Calvinism, which affirms the universal extent of Christ’s redemption, are both guilty of legalism. He questioned the benefit of modified Calvinism, which in his view simply demands two satisfactions for the same sin. *MC*, 91.

³³ McLeod Campbell concluded Owen’s, Baxter’s and Grotius’ doctrines of redemption were all erroneous based on the fact they were built upon a legal view of satisfaction. The logical consequence of McLeod Campbell’s pronouncement against these theologians is a condemnation of Fraser’s theory of redemption as well, irrespective of its universal extent. *MC*, 84-85.

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